THE·BLUE·BIRDS'
UNCLE·BEN

LILLIAN·ELIZABETH·ROY

Mary Ann Sachs.
Columbus O, R.F.D. R.

"Uncle Ben! Here come the farm-sleds for the little ones," shouted Don.

(*Page 86*)

("*The Blue Birds' Uncle Ben.*")

THE BLUE BIRDS' UNCLE BEN

By LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY

AUTHOR OF

"The Blue Birds of Happy Times Nest," "The Blue Birds' Winter Nest," "The Blue Birds at Happy Hills," "The Five Little Starrs Series," "The Girl Scouts' Country Life Series," etc.

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THE BLUE BIRDS' UNCLE BEN

CHAPTER I

THE NEW YORK PARTY

"Are we all here?" called Uncle Ben, trying to count the bobbing heads of the children who were on the veranda of Ruth Talmage's house, awaiting the automobiles that were to take them to the Oakdale station.

"Oh, I say! Uncle Ben—where's Flutey?" cried Ned Talmage, as he craned his neck trying to find his great-aunt, Miss Selina.

"I'm coming—I just went back for a moment to get a few copies of our last magazine. You can never tell when you want one, you know, and I believe in being provided," came from a white-haired old lady who hurried out of the front door at Ned's call.

Meantime, the automobiles came up and some of the eager children jumped in.

"Who's coming in this first car?" called Dot Starr, with an anxious note in her tones.

"Dot's afraid she'll miss the train?" laughed Mrs. Starr, as she stood on the bottom step of the piazza.

"No I'm not, Mumzie, but someone's got to make a beginning. It's a sure thing that we'll never keep that appointment in New York unless we get started!" retorted Dot, pulling at Ruth Talmage to drag her into the car with her.

"Dot's logic sounds right—so here we go, get in any machine handiest, and let's be off!" advised Mrs. Catlin, one of the Blue Bird Mothers of the Nest at Mossy Glen.

Three cars whirled through the village of Oakdale with so much shouting and laughing from the children that the smiling villagers stood still and watched them pass by.

Of course you readers remember who our little friends are, don't you? You read of them when they started their Happy Times Nest where they had such fun in building it in a big tree and furnishing it with the articles the fairies

left under brushes and trees. Then, the Fourth of July Christmas Tree they had on the lawn when so many scores of children enjoyed the party. Also the Fresh Air Fund they started and the visit to the slums of New York to find some Little Citizens to practise on.

Then, you remember how they made the Winter Nest in the house, and the boys began their Bobolink Band to do all of the printing, and the little magazine that was the outgrowth of Ned's weekly paper called *The Chirp*. Wasn't that a wonderful time—the day the little publishing company issued their first paper? And the wonderful stories of the Civil War and the Klondike?

Well, well! The Blue Birds and Bobolinks have done a lot of things since that day, and now their Uncle Ben, the editor of a New York magazine, is taking them to the city where a number of philanthropists and publishers wish to meet the little workers they have heard so much about recently. Uncle Ben arranged the treat, so that is why he was so busy seeing that everyone was present on time to catch the train which would soon carry them to the terminal at Hoboken.

The merry crowd of children, accompanied by some of their elders, attracted much attention from passengers on the train, and when they reached Hoboken, Uncle Ben had to cover his ears to protect his hearing.

Before they reached the entrance to the tubes that ran under the Hudson River, they had to pass the wide entrance to the fine restaurant that is in the D. L. & W. terminal at Hoboken. This was Don Starr's opportunity so he quickly sidled up to his friend, Uncle Ben.

"Say, Uncle Ben, don't you think it is a long time between breakfast and supper?"

Uncle Ben laughed heartily. "Folks, I have just been reminded that I may get to be a teeny weeny bit faint before my supper-party to-night, so I propose that we have luncheon here in this restaurant. Who agrees with me?"

While all of the boys shouted, "Me, me!" the girls looked at the Grownups to see if it would be wise to stop.

"Will we have plenty of time to eat and then go uptown to the theatre?" asked Mrs. Talmage.

"Oh, plenty! It's just one block west of the tube station you know, and it is not yet one

o'clock. I figure that we shall have ample time to lunch and still meet our friends on time," replied Uncle Ben, consulting his watch.

So they all entered the big busy restaurant and enjoyed a treat that was not included in the schedule Uncle Ben had outlined for the day. Of course, everyone ordered ice-cream for dessert, and joy of joys! Uncle Ben told the waiter to heap up the dishes without regard to the cost.

From here, they went in the tube and were soon being carried under the deep wide Hudson —but you would never dream there was such a volume of water over-head above the tubes. The cars are very similar to those in use in subways, and soon they carry you to the New York side of the river, stopping at the stations on the way uptown.

"Uncle Ben, these are funny cars, but I s'pose they are made this way on purpose, eh?" wondered Ruth, looking about her at the steel fittings and concrete floors.

"Yes, and they say that even if the tubes should leak and let the river flow through them, these cars are so constructed as to resist the pressure of water and keep them safe for a long

time. But the engineering on this tunnel is so wonderful that there seems to be no possible way for the water to get in."

After leaving the tubes Uncle Ben led his party to the Grand Opera House where the Blue Bird play was to be given.

Not quite so much talking and laughing came from the children as they neared the place appointed to meet Uncle Ben's friends, for the little ones had never met any of them although their names and fame were familiar to most people.

In the lobby of the theatre, Ruth pulled Uncle Ben's sleeve and whispered, "You let us get behind the Grownups and introduce them first, so we can see how they do it."

Uncle Ben smiled but had not the opportunity to obey his little niece's wishes, for his friends were already there, and standing just where they could catch the first peep of the Blue Birds and Bobolinks as they came to the doors.

One man quickly called the attention of his party by saying, "Here they are—our little philanthropists from Oakdale!"

The kindly welcome immediately put the chil-

dren at ease, and they were all soon laughing and talking with each other.

While passing an open doorway which had a sign "Private" on the panel, Meredith Starr and Ned Talmage happened to glance into the room. Ned caught at Mete's sleeve wonderingly when they saw many tiers of magazines piled upon the floor of the office.

"This is where those hundreds of copies came when Uncle Ben said he would give shipping directions at the express office. I thought maybe he was planning to give them away in the slums," whispered Mete.

"He must have had permission from the manager here to distribute them. I wonder when they expect to do it?" said Ned.

"Let's get him off on one side and ask him what the plot is. When he knows that we know about the magazines he will tell us," suggested Mete.

Uncle Ben was seen walking over towards the office while talking to a tall man who seemed to order everyone belonging to the theatre. As soon as Uncle Ben saw the two boys eager to

speak to him, he placed a hand on his companion's arm for a moment and said, "Well, boys?"

"We saw the magazines Uncle Ben, and we are very anxious to know what they are here for," said Ned.

The boys were introduced to the manager and Uncle Ben added, "We are permitted to give out a copy to everyone leaving the theatre this afternoon. Thus, only people who are really interested in high-class literature and true philanthropy will get a copy to take home and examine at their leisure. The type of patrons who come to see this play are the kind you want to interest in your plans."

As Uncle Ben explained, the two boys saw the good to be done and thanked him for his thoughtfulness.

"Come on, boys, we're all going in now," called Don Starr at this moment.

"Yes, do hurry or we'll be late for the beginning!" added Dot Starr, dragging at Mete's coat.

Soon the entire party was comfortably seated in adjoining boxes on the first balcony from which they could see everything on the stage and

in the whole auditorium as well. To the great surprise of the Oakdale party, the boxes occupied by them were decorated with American flags and Blue Birds flying all about the flags. The birds were suspended from the ceiling above by fine wire and as the currents of air circulated past the boxes the birds were swayed or revolved about to make them appear as if they were flying.

But the children were soon completely absorbed in the play and they delighted thoroughly in the acting of the two little children who left home to seek for the Blue Bird of Happiness. When the great Sea Pilot came in his boat to the region where lived the unborn, the Oakdale children were highly amused to watch the tiny little tots act with perfect self-composure. The tiniest of them all, who called himself "An Honest Man," was so cute that Ruth said she just felt like hugging him.

As the curtain rolled down at the last scene, the sighs heard from every direction attested to the interest in the play.

"Dear me, I wish it was just beginning again!" said Ruth.

"Yes, but you forget how tired the little ones must be after three hours of continuous acting," reminded Mrs. Talmage.

Uncle Ben had left the box just before the last curtain, but now he came hurrying back with the manager. To the great delight of the Oakdale party, they were invited to go back of the scenes and meet the real Blue Bird children. Even the Grownups were pleased with this plan and they were soon filing along the narrow entry that led from the stage to the rooms back of the scenes.

Everything here was novel to the visitors and they were curious to know what all the strange things were used for. But Uncle Ben said the baby actors were even now being dressed to go home and they must hurry or miss them.

And now the children from Oakdale saw real actors!

Not one of the boys was as old as the Bobolink Boys, and the girls were not taller or older than the Blue Birds. The baby who played "The Honest Man" was actually only two and a half years of age and so tiny and chubby that Ruth had her wish and hugged him.

Most of the players had their make-up removed before the visitors came in, but some few of them were still having their faces rubbed to remove the grease-paint. Their darkened eyes and highly crimsoned cheeks looked very funny to the Oakdale children, but the manager explained why it was necessary to use paint and powder on the stage.

The names and addresses of each little player was written down by Uncle Ben who said that each would be presented with a year's subscription to the magazine. Then each was given a copy from the tiers in the lobby and the manager led his party back to the auditorium. Here the Blue Birds and Bobolinks from Oakdale thanked him and followed Uncle Ben to the entrance hall.

But the surprises were not yet over. When the B. B. & B. B. party passed through the lobby, some uniformed boys handed out copies of a magazine so like their very own that the young publishers gasped. Mete and Ned exchanged glances with Uncle Ben, when the others exclaimed at the surprise.

"Oh! Dot, see here, our very own magazine!" shouted Don.

"Yes, our very owny own!" cried Dot, reaching out the magazine to attract the attention of Uncle Ben who was talking animatedly to Ned and Mete.

"Why, so it is! How did it ever get down here?" said Uncle Ben, finally.

"Humph! Guess *you* know more about it than you'll say!" declared Don, looking shrewdly at the culprit.

The Grownups laughed and Uncle Ben wisely remarked, "That private dining-room is all ready for us at the hotel!"

"If you're paying for it by the hour, I guess we'd better hurry up and make the most of it," said practical Don.

His sally was received with laughter for it was always Don or Dot who made such blunt remarks in such funny ways.

"Shall we walk or ride uptown to the hotel?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Oh, let's walk and see the lights up on that street!" eagerly replied Ned, nodding at Broad-

way with its brilliant electric signs flashing everywhere.

"Oh no, Ben! Do you think we ladies are centipedes? How could we ever race about after two dozen lively children going up that crowded street," objected Mrs. Talmage.

"Ah, we won't bother you any," begged Ned and Jinks.

"You may all mean well, children, but I believe in 'safety first.' Ben, call some taxicabs for us!" said Mrs. Talmage, decidedly.

So the visitors were whisked from the opera house to the hotel in less time than they dreamed possible; once in the hotel lobby, the children stood and gazed around in awe. The flunkies, the palms and green bay trees, the vastness of the place with here and there groups of wonderfully gowned women and men in black, made its impression. Then, the manager saw Uncle Ben and hurried from his desk to welcome the party for whom he had arranged a dinner.

"So these are the young publishers, are they, Mr. Talmage?" remarked the gentleman, after being introduced.

"Yes, and I am glad to have you meet them

for some day they are going to ask a favor of you," laughed Uncle Ben, who had planned an idea to use the hotels for Little Citizens' purposes.

"I shall be delighted, I'm sure!" responded the manager.

"There now, friends! You all heard him commit himself, didn't you? Well, we will take advantage of his promise, never fear. Soon, you will have to render faithful fulfillment of the offer to help us," chuckled Uncle Ben.

The manager smiled doubtfully for he was not sure whether he had committed himself to something he could not easily perform. He led the way, however, to the room engaged for the party, while talking animatedly with some of the Grown-ups.

The entire party, following in twos and threes along a thickly carpeted corridor, entered a room through heavy velours portière.

Once inside the room, everyone stopped to exclaim in admiring voices at the lovely decorations. Trellises of roses and climbing vines stood in each wall-space between the windows and doors, and among these green leaves, and

upon tendrils of vines, sat or swung Blue Birds as if alive and just ready to sing or take wing.

The ceiling was festooned with ropes of green vines from which Blue Birds were suspended by invisible wire similar to that in the theatre box. The long table had a miniature woodland scene in the center, and here birds and flowers vied with each other in color and beauty.

Upon the polished plate glass covering the dining-table, the sparkling bluebird dishes and bluebird glassware reflected beautifully; while the bluebird doilies under each plate and drinking glass, and the blue and earth-brown satin ribbons that streamed from the back of each chair, made a festive appearance calculated to make everyone sigh with pleasure.

"Oh, isn't it bee-autiful!" exclaimed Ruth, clasping her hands.

"I never saw anything half as lovely!" added Betty.

"I just guess Uncle Ben told that green-house man to go ahead and never mind the cost!" suggested Dot.

"Yes, just like he told the waiter-man about

the ice-cream this noon," added Don, upon whom that unlimited order had left an impression.

The others walked about and admired until Don felt impatient, so he said, "Fine dishes and trimmings are all right, but they're not very filling!"

"See here, Don! Don't you go and spoil this bee-autiful party by talking of eating!" chided his sister Lavinia, who was old enough to feel the responsibility of the twins.

"But, Vene, isn't that what we came to the hotel for? Uncle Ben didn't hire this room just for us to look at stuffed birds and artificial vines, did he?" persisted Don.

Of course everyone laughed and Uncle Ben marshalled each one to a chair and sat down at the head of the table.

It was a wonderful party! The climax was reached when the ice-cream appeared made in the form of little nests, each nest holding a dear little bluebird.

The moment the children had finished their dessert Uncle Ben stood up to speak. The waiters were distributing dishes of fruit and nuts, and each one received an individual souvenir box

of bon bons. On top of each box was a twig of green leaves with a tiny bluebird perched on the twig.

"While the rest of you enjoy your fruit and bon bons I am going to take the opportunity to tell all of you Blue Birds and Bobolinks something besides the names of the friends who are gathered about this table with you.

"This smiling-faced gentleman at my right is the Secretary of the National Audubon Society, and he has some fine ideas for you children to work out and to have published in your magazine. He will talk to you later and explain his plans.

"Next to the Secretary is an old acquaintance of every boy and girl who ever heard of Woodcraft, even though they may never have met the Founder of the Organization. This Big Chief has a message for you children also, and he, with his charming wife who is sitting next to him, will be delighted to have you all join his Woodcraft Boys and Girls. Right next to me on the left, is the lady who is the most enthusiastic Woodcrafter in the League. What the girls would do without her it is hard to say.

"Next to this lady is the renowned singer, daughter of the Rebecca you read about in the Civil War Story told by Miss Selina in the Winter Nest. Now, now, what is all this commotion about?" Uncle Ben smiled at the children as they all exclaimed and half-rose from their chairs with the intention of running over to greet the individual they felt they all knew so well.

The attractive lady smiled winningly at each one and then Uncle Ben continued his speech.

"Next to our own particular Star of Song sits the renowned singer who is going to revolutionize the people by having each one create harmony for themselves in their own hearts. He is in the city just now, teaching a great Community Chorus who will sing the Messiah at Christmas time. We are all invited to join his class and sing with his chorus in Madison Square.

"And right next to this gentleman is one of the leading Welfare Workers in New York. When the singer spoke of having a great Carol sung for the public, the Welfare gentleman said he would have a giant Tree of Light, the finest ever seen in a city park for the public. A few years ago he introduced the plan of having

Christmas Trees in the parks so that everyone could see and enjoy a tree even if they had none at home.

"And little friends, right next to the Welfare Worker is a lady you must make one of your best friends. She is one of the prime movers in the 'Fresh Air Movement' for the sick and needy children, so she will be the one to help you fill the Nests at Happy Hills next summer."

As Uncle Ben told the children of the work and fame of each individual present at their party, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks felt insignificant indeed, for their charity work was still too young to have caused comment, but they were delighted to meet these people who could be such valuable friends and advisors.

Then Uncle Ben began to tell the Grownups what wonderful work the young publishers did at Oakdale, and what great plans they had made for helping others who needed help and good cheer. The children smiled and looked about to see if the visitors were smiling at Uncle Ben's teasing, but they found that everyone seemed to take his words seriously, so they wondered if he really meant it all!

A long time was spent in talking and planning for new ideas for the Blue Birds and Bobolinks to carry out, and when the time came for the Oakdale party to start for the last train, several important matters had been decided.

"Well, then, the first thing to do is to have a rousing big number of our Christmas magazine. We shall have most of the manual labor done in New York this month so as to give the young publishers more time to do the hundred and one important things that are to be done before Christmas. We shall print up enough copies so that each child at the Tree of Light at Madison Square may have a book to take home.

"Second: It is agreed that we be present at the Municipal Tree and sing in the chorus and later assist in entertaining the poor Little Citizens who are to be invited to go in the Madison Square Gardens for cake and ice-cream. At that time, we shall mention the winter's day to be spent in the country, and issue the tickets for that trip to Oakdale. Mr. Richards will take care of the notices to appear in the New York papers when the day is decided upon.

"Third: Our guests here this evening have ac-

cepted our invitation to come out to Oakdale some fine cold day and enjoy the coasting and skating we can offer them. This will have to be very soon for we intend planning at that time for the visit of the city children who have never seen the country in its white winter garb.

"Now, have I forgotten anything?" asked Uncle Ben, looking about at the eager faces watching him.

"You never said a word about the stories you said you would get from these friends for our Christmas number," reminded Ned.

"Sure enough! I told these young publishers that I was sure many of you Grownups would donate a poem or story to the magazine for this month. Now, be sure and send them in immediately for our Christmas issue must be a good one and right on time, too!" declared Uncle Ben.

Thereupon, the Welfare Worker promised to tell a true story of the eastside settlement work; the Secretary of the National Audubon Society agreed to write up and send pictures of some birds. The Big Chief of the Woodcraft Indians offered to relate some Indian tales, and so on,

until the children found they would have all the material they could use for the next issue of their magazine.

"Don't forget to print enough copies for our Benevolent Institutions!" said the Welfare Worker as they all left the room.

"And be sure to send us enough copies to distribute among my rich clients who make donations for the poor," added the man who worked faithfully to advance the happiness of the poor.

"Dear me, I'm glad we won't have to run that press to turn off all of those magazines! Just think of the work in addressing and wrapping all those thousands, too! I should think the writer who has to do all of that would have cramps," said Jinks.

"Oh, they are not written by hand any more, you know. The subscription lists are all stencilled and the papers fed in a machine that prints each stencil card in the list. But the extra names or those for sample copies are written by folks who write so fast that you can't see their pens move," said Uncle Ben.

"My! I don't know what we shall do with

ourselves when this Christmas fun is over!" sighed Ruth.

"Don't sigh *now,* you goose! Why, we haven't even started the Christmas fun yet, and here you are sighing as if it was all gone!" cried Dot.

They all laughed at that, and Ruth joined in.

Then Uncle Ben reminded them it was high time they were off if the train was to be caught that night.

As everyone shook hands and said good-night in the hotel lobby, they reminded each other to be sure to remember the Tree of Light on Christmas Night.

All were soon bustled in taxi-cabs and travelling downtown to the Hudson Tubes. Many a glance was given the crowds constantly going up and down Broadway in the bright glare of electric lights and over-head signs, and the children thought that New York at midnight was as light as Oakdale in the morning sunshine!

When in the cars on the way home, the party of Blue Bird and Bobolinks voted that they had had a great day! Not only in pleasure and pastime but in good work planned and promised for

the future of their organization. And the motion put by Dot and seconded by Ned, that they send a vote of thanks to Uncle Ben and his friends, was carried without a dissenting "Nay."

CHAPTER II

AT THE TREE OF LIGHT

The children were permitted to sleep later than usual the morning after the theatre party, but the moment the Blue Birds and Bobolinks met again, the entire talk was about the coming Tree of Light and what they could do to make a happy Christmas party for the Little Citizens of New York.

"I tried to keep awake last night to remember the plan that came to me in bed, but I just couldn't do it!" complained Ruth.

"Ho! I should say you couldn't! Why your eyelids were half shut all the way from Hoboken!" cried Don.

"No they weren't, either, Don Starr! Ruth was wider awake than you were! I *saw* your head nod down and then jerk up every few minutes, so there!" defended Dot.

Don was so surprised to hear his twin-sister

take sides against him that he was silenced for the time being—at least he was silent for two whole minutes which is a long time for the Starr twins.

During the moment of quiet that followed Ned made a suggestion.

"I sat in the den this noon and figured out a plan that I believe is just the right thing."

"Let's hear it—maybe we can help you polish up the idea," added Jinks.

"If you'll let me speak without interruption again maybe I can tell you," laughed Ned, while the children drew closer about him as he spoke.

"If we make up some sort of a striking letter and have the engraver make a plate of it so we can print all the copies we need, we might send out this letter to every hotel-keeper and restaurant man in Greater New York, so they can donate stuff or money for the refreshments for Madison Square Garden Christmas Night. Why, if everyone sent one quart of cream and a cake; see how many gallons of cream and how many hundreds of cakes we should have," concluded Ned.

"That sounds like a first-class idea, Ned!"

cried Don, and the others joined in a chorus of approval.

"I wonder if any of the Little Citizens will want sandwishes?" ventured Betty, who never said "sand*wiches*."

"I guess those poor starved little things will take anything they can get, but we've got to be sensible you know, with such a big crowd," added Mete Starr.

"How many do you s'pose will be there?" asked Frances.

"Why, the man who will sing the Christmas Carols said there were at least ten thousand present last year when he sang out by the Tree—and this year, it being more generally known among the poor, he thinks there will be so many that they won't all be able to get in the Garden, especially, if there is to be cake and ice-cream," said Ned.

"Good gracious! Where will all the spoons and dishes come from?" wondered Dot.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you! Mr. Richards told Uncle Ben that he was going after that rich man who owns the ten-cent stores and have him donate the paper plates and little tin spoons be-

cause he keeps them in his stores, you know!" added Jinks.

"That will be great!" murmured Don.

"Ned, I wonder if anyone thought of giving out a ticket for refreshment to each child who enters the front door at the Garden? There ought to be some system to it, you know, or some of those street boys will get ten plates of cream while the meek, timid ones will get left!" declared Jinks.

"That's a wise remark, Jinks, and one we ought to mention to Uncle Ben," replied Ned.

"When will we see him again, do you think?" asked Mete.

"He promised to come down from the city tonight and talk over different things with us," returned Ned.

"Then we'll mention this ticket business and print them up on time—the Blue Birds can cut them apart and count them out in packages so we will know how many we have," said Jinks.

So the Publishing Company was told to print twenty thousand oblong tickets each one bearing the line "Good for a dish of cream."

Uncle Ben thought the idea of sending letters

to hotel-men in the city a good one and the form of letter was constructed that same night.

"That's a fine letter, Uncle Ben," complimented Ned.

"And one that will bring forth frozen charity, eh?" laughed Uncle Ned.

"As long as it's flavored and called ice-cream we won't care whether it's frozen or boiled!" added Aunt Selina.

Everyone laughed and Ruth said, "I thought of something this afternoon, but it isn't very important."

"Maybe it is, how do we know?" encouraged Uncle Ben.

"Well, if Mr. Richards would write some catchy articles for the newspapers a few days before Christmas telling everyone what the Tree and donations are for, we will have all New York and towns round about it interested in the plan. Of course, hotel-men will like to think they are helping along something that everyone knows of and then they will send in heaps of ice-cream and cake—and who knows but what some of the richest of these hotel-owners will do lots more than

give refreshments!" explained Ruth, while everyone listened attentively

"I declare, Ruth will make a fine advertising man some day!" exclaimed Uncle Ben, while the others thought her idea a splendid one.

"It is quite plain that you take after your Uncle Ben in your commercial instincts!" laughed Mr. Talmage.

"It would have been more appropriate if Ruth had thought of the tickets and Ned of the advertising!" commented Mrs. Talmage.

"This is the day of the woman—spelled with a capital W—so how could Ruth take second place when her mother has such advanced ideas about the rights and votes for females!" teased Uncle Ben, who agreed with his quick-witted sister-in-law in all things.

"But it does sound queer for such a little girl to have such big business ideas!" persisted Mrs. Talmage, who seemed to forget that Ruth had left her baby-clothes far behind her.

Ruth's idea was accepted as a good one and Uncle Ben consulted Mr. Richards who eagerly agreed to run a daily article in all of the papers he could win over to help on the plan.

The result of the newspaper stories was that many people became interested and sent in donations to carry on the interesting and helpful work started by the Blue Birds and Bobolinks. This made it possible for Uncle Ben to order a double quantity of Christmas Magazines to be freely distributed in the homes of the poor and the hospitals and asylums in greater New York.

The tickets were printed and sent to the Chairman of the Tree Committee; the letters were printed on dainty note paper and mailed to the list of hotel-men and restaurant men, and the willing replies to help cheered the children tremendously. From the articles mentioned in the daily papers, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks gathered that this Tree of Light was going to be a huge success long to be remembered by everyone.

Then, one morning, when Daddum Starr opened his morning paper at Oakwood and Mr. Talmage glanced over his at Mossy Glenn they were astonished at what they saw.

The whole second page was devoted to the fine work the children of Oakdale were doing and pictures of the Blue Birds and Bobolinks grouped

in front of their barn publishing-house were shown. The article mentioned the Christmas cheer these children planned and the winter's day outing they hoped to be able to give the Little Citizens of New York very soon. Then followed a request for warm hoods, mittens, sweaters, leggings, and any article of clothing that would help the poorly clad city children. But it was specifically said that no cast-off or soiled garments should be sent to Oakdale—only new or perfectly whole and clean articles would be accepted.

The long story ended with the plans under way for a camp at Happy Hills where hundreds of children could find rest and health all during the summer days. The name of the woman at the head of Welfare Work was mentioned as receiver of all gifts sent for this camp work.

"Well, that reads like Ben's writing," commented Mr. Talmage as he passed the paper to Ruth to see the pictures.

"He said the other day that we couldn't begin too soon to interest charitable people in this camp work," said Ned.

Then came a telegram from Uncle Ben calling a special meeting of the publishers at the offices

of the company the coming Saturday afternoon at one o'clock.

To be sure, they were all there and Uncle Ben spoke.

"Mr. Richards has had so many inquiries about the Blue Birds and Bobolinks that he has been requested to present all of you to the public on Christmas Night. Even the Little Citizens who have never been out here have heard of you from the fortunate ones who have met you and they wish to see and thank you. So, I want to coach you about getting up on the platform and making a bow to the audience. Then some of you may have to speak and tell of your hopes and plans."

"Oh, Uncle Ben!" gasped everyone present.

"Yes, but there is more to tell! The man who always gave the Tree of Light and paid the costs of it, is so pleased at the way you have abetted his work that he is going to address the public and enlist their sympathies in the whole work."

"Oh, Uncle Ben!" gasped everyone again.

"Do you know what you are asking us to do?" cried Ned, tragically, pulling at his tousled hair in desperation.

"Yes," laughed Uncle Ben; "I am asking you

to face at least twenty thousand—or as many people as can crowd in the Garden. There will be thousands in the galleries who will be eager to view the "feeding of the multitudes" on the Lord's Birthday. And it is not the material symbols of cream and cake that is rousing such a lively interest in New Yorkers, but the fact that a little group of children never heard of before started a work for their little fellow citizens' uplift and encouragement. The hearts of humans are so softened by this great World-War and the sufferings of mortals that it takes little now to change hardened hearts to compassion, So your work has touched the great mass of humanity and you should respond to the call to see and hear you."

Uncle Ben's serious voice and the pictures he outlined in his words showed the young publishers what might result from their small beginnings.

"Say, Uncle Ben, if the other fellows won't speak I will do it for them!" volunteered Don, after a time of silence.

"I guess you would!" jeered the other boys.

"What would you say?" asked Uncle Ben, encouragingly.

"Oh, I'd tell the folks something that would make them sit up and take notice of Little Citizens!" bragged Don.

"Just like Don! He'd smash into a glass shop with a sledge-hammer!" roared Mete, while Uncle Ben smiled.

"This speech is not to be considered as a joke, you know boys," said Uncle Ben. "It will be so important a part of your success in the whole work that I had Mr. Richards make a note of the points you boys must try to bring out when you have the opportunity. Remember, a short speech of terse remarks is far more effective than a long one bristling with literary high-lights."

As the Blue Birds were not included in the speech-making they sat and listened to Uncle Ben train the Bobolink Boys. Then the girls were called upon to act as they would when they were called upon to present themselves on the platform before the public and acknowledge the honor by a bow.

When the practise for that day was over, Ruth

asked, "What part are you going to play in this performance, Uncle Ben?"

"Well, they have chosen me to be a Santa Claus and hand out the magazines to those who pass by my booth."

"Oh, you'll make a dandy Santa Claus!" laughed the children, clapping their hands.

"Will you have on a red coat and long white whiskers?" asked Betty, smiling at the idea.

"Yes, indeed! I must have on all of the trimmings to make the little ones appreciate the books I give out to them."

Then Ned remarked, "It's a funny thing, but here we are supposed to be the publishers and owners of a monthly magazine, and we haven't seen or heard anything of the stories that are being published in our grand Christmas Number! Did you ever hear of editors like that before?"

"Oh, that's quite the thing for editors who are worth millions. They merely bear the honorable title of editor but they'd make a mess of the publications if they had to work on the material published. Why, we have one man who never even comes to America, let alone doing any edi-

torial work! All he does is reap what he has not sown!" commented Uncle Ben, seriously.

The children listened silently, and then Uncle Ben added:

"But you are not going to be such a publisher! You must take an active interest in your paper. This work of reaching your public is more important just now than doing press-work. However, you will not have cause to complain when you see the magazine our men in New York will turn over to you."

"I'm so afraid they won't be ready for the Treat!" said Ruth, anxiously.

"Why, great tiers of them are already waiting in the stock-room at Madison Square Garden—waiting for the little outstretched hands eager to take them. And what is more, I firmly believe that the Grownups will be as eager for a copy as any of your Little Citizens will be. If there are any left after the children are provided we might give them away to the adults to take home. But these were especially printed for distribution among the children. I brought a few copies with me in my bag for you to approve. I think it is a mighty fine number," said Uncle

Ben, nodding his head at the young publishers.

"Do you know, we have had so many other things to do this month that I never had a moment to think of the magazine!" declared Jinks.

"Which goes to show that my plan to print it in the city was a good idea, eh?" replied Uncle Ben.

"You old fogies can sit here and browse over things past and gone, but *I* am going to the house and see that magazine!" exclaimed Ned, making for the door.

"We're all with you on that!" added the other boys, and before Uncle Ben could object he was left alone in the barn.

Christmas Eve came and each Blue Bird and Bobolink found ample fun and gifts about their own trees, but the great event to which all had looked forward and worked for was yet to be—The Tree of Light in the city on Christmas Night.

Long before complete darkness came over the city great numbers of children in every condition gathered at Madison Square about the giant tree. Most of them shivered with cold but felt it not, for their hearts and thoughts were filled with

anticipation of all they had heard would occur that night.

The Blue Birds and Bobolinks were marshalled up to the tree near the raised platform where the great singer would give the masses the harmony of his Christmas Carols. Here they could look over the multitude and wonder at the vast number of poor children who seemed not to have had a Christmas until that night.

Promptly at seven-thirty the singer stood upon the platform and raised one hand for attention. Instantly a hush fell over the great audience, thus subsiding the confusion that had hitherto reigned.

"I am going to sing our wonderful Christmas hymn, then 'Hark, the Herald Angels,' and conclude my solos with 'Holy Night.' After that I am going to sing for you one verse of 'March, March, March,' so as to give you the tune and swing of this fine marching song, and all who intend joining us in the Garden must fall in line and sing with me as we march to the building to see what Santa Claus has brought each one of you. Now, remember! You must all hum

the tune as you march or you won't be a good Comrade!"

As the clear far-reaching voice stopped at the conclusion of "Holy Night," the speaker waited a few moments to give the crowds time to prepare for the march and then he started to sing the first verse.

"March, march, march, march!
March, comrades, march along.
March, march, march, march,
March, a hundred million strong!
On through dark and battle's road,
On where none has dared before,
On to pay the ages' score;
March, march, march!
Forward, comrades,
March, march, forever,
Up with the break of day,
Out on the trackless way!
Ours the will that must and can,
Ours to own creation's plan,
Ours to win the world for man:
March, comrades, march!" *

During the last few lines of the inspiring song the little children, with entire thought concentrated on the singer, felt the thrilling measures

* Marching song by Arthur Farwell; copyrighted and published by G. Shirmer.

of the music and hummed unconsciously as they listened.

The first verse sung, the singer left the platform and motioned to Uncle Ben and Mr. Richards, who stood at the foot of the platform steps, to lead their little band directly after him. He began singing with all his heart and started to march toward the Garden, followed by the Blue Birds and Bobolink Band humming the tune, while Uncle Ben and Mr. Richards sang the words for all their worth—they knew the song well, it appeared.

The Blue Birds and Bobolinks had not seen or heard of the decorations at the Garden, so they were as pleased as their little guests when they first entered the brilliantly illuminated hall and saw the draped greens from box to box, and the giant tree in the center of the great floor. Christmas trees stood up against each partition that led to the stairs going up to the balconies, and Boy Scouts were stationed at intervals to maintain order. At the far end of the hall stood a platform which glistened with artificial snow —the white cotton that festooned the green branches enclosing the dais, as well as that

spread upon the flooring, was thickly sprinkled with diamond dust.

As each child marched in at the wide front doors, a ticket was handed him, which permitted the bearer to have a dish of ice-cream and a slice of cake.

The hotel-men had responded most liberally to the call for donations to the treat, and of course, many of them were present to see the sight that promised such pleasure to the children. As the laughter and cries of happy childhood were heard everywhere that night, the Grownups felt that too many of these treats given in all big cities could not be held, for there were plenty of Little Citizens waiting for joy.

Then came Santa Claus out of a dark corner with a well-filled pack upon his back. Directly behind him came a number of little boys and girls who were to assist Santa in handing out magazines to every Little Citizen present that night.

Word flew from mouth to mouth that these were the little children comprising the publishing company that planned and did the work of so many fine things for Little Citizens. When

the magazines had been distributed the singer who had marshalled the public to the Garden stood upon the platform and said, "I wish to introduce our friends from Oakdale and when we hear what they have to say for themselves, I suggest that we approve their plans with a 'Hip, Hip, Hurrah!' "

But such zeal did the Little Citizens feel for their publishers that they shouted at once, with such fervor that the waves of sound seemed to lift the roof of the great structure.

During the confusion that occurred with the shouting, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks climbed up to the platform to make a bow to the public who eagerly welcomed their appearance.

The children who had given their tickets for cream and cake to the cashier, had received a smaller ticket which said the bearer was entitled to one copy of a magazine. As the Scouts formed the line, the children passed by the platform where the Blue Birds and Bobolinks handed out copies of their magazine as fast as their hands could move.

When it seemed that every child had been provided with a copy of the Christmas number,

there was a call for the young publishers to show themselves and speak.

This was a momentous time for the Oakdale boys who had never before faced so vast an audience, and many a grown man would have quailed at the thought of speaking to so many thousands; so it was pardonable if Mete and Ned spoke in trembling voices, while Tuck and some of the other boys were speechless. Jinks and Don, however, acquitted themselves as usual, Jinks taking the burden of Ned's speech upon himself, while Don decided to add the few explanatory words his brother Mete had been expected to deliver.

Don concluded in a ringing voice that reached the farthest corners of the great Garden, "So now, folks, we want all of you who have the money to give and help the children to get warm clothes to wear when they come out to our sleighride party. And every child here is invited to come and spend the day in the country and slide and skate and sleighride down our hills, at the time you see it given out in the newspapers. This man here (taking hold of Mr. Richards' coat and pulling him forward) will look after

that end of the party, and let you all know. From present appearances, it looks as if we might have the party the first of next week—if the snow lasts."

During the last words of the speech, titterings could be heard as people tried to stifle their laughter at the brave little speaker, but the moment Don made his bow and backed away from the front of the platform, the house fairly cracked with the clapping and applause given his invitation.

Then Uncle Ben took advantage of the spirit manifested, and jumped up to add a few words.

"As we are all gathered at this time, and it seems as if no better time could be found, I say that the Blue Birds and Bobolinks and Boy Scouts pass about the galleries where all of our friends are seated and take up a collection for the buying of the warm apparel necessary to give comfort to the children who will visit the country next week. This will save time and expense in collecting the fund between this and next week."

This was vigorously approved by the younger element, so the collection was made then and

there, while reporters of city newspapers were kept busy emptying and counting the sums collected by the solicitors. During the children's speech-making, the singer who had given his interest to the entertainment, had discovered other famous singers and he now drew them upon the platform to assist in entertaining the multitude while the collections were being taken up.

Thus it was that the audience in that gathering were treated to solos from half a score of famous singers who eagerly gave their talents to insure success to this benevolent meeting.

When the singing was over, Uncle Ben stood up and said: "Now, children, everyone who wishes to go out to the country for a winter's day sport next week must apply to the Chairman of this entertainment and receive a ticket for the day, as well as leave his name and address. The railroad company will give us free passage on their road and we must know how many children intend going, so that sufficient carriage can be provided. The mittens, caps and mufflers will be distributed when you get off the train, so don't worry about those things."

Even before Uncle Ben had finished his directions to the audience, many of his hearers began calling to him, "I wanta go!" or "Give me a ticket!" so that it became necessary for the Boy Scouts to hurry into the crowd and keep order.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF THE MAGAZINE

So many demands had been made on the time and thought of our Blue Birds and Bobolinks that not one of the children had really taken sufficient leisure to look over or read the stories contributed by the well-known New Yorkers. The day after Christmas, however, there seemed to be a great void of work in their lives, and they all gathered at the Publishing House to talk about things and plan for the Country Outing which was to take place the following week.

While the others were eagerly discussing the outing, Ned was poring over the magazine made by the regular printers in the city. He could not see that there was any difference between the issue published by his Bobolinks or this one done by the trade in New York. Consequently, he felt elated to think his own club had done such good work on the preceding issue. Then

he read some of the articles sent in to Uncle Ben by friends.

"I say, did you boys and girls read any of these stories given in our Christmas Number?" asked he.

"Not yet! Let's hear some of them now," replied Jinks.

"Who brought their magazines?" questioned Mete, looking about to find that only a few of the children had brought any. "A package of extra copies came by express this morning, and we can use them," suggested Mete. So the package which had not been opened was hastily torn apart and everyone was handed a copy of the paper.

"It certainly is a good-looking number, isn't it?" approved Don, scanning the pages.

"Not any better than the one we made all alone!" defended Ruth.

"I should say not! Ours was just as fine!" added Ned.

"Here's a good short article by that woman teacher in singing. She was at the Garden last night and told me how interested she was in our work for the poor children. She gave a five-

dollar bill to Uncle Ben for warm clothing for the outing party!" commended Jinks, reading the article mentioned.

"Read it out loud, Jinks," cried Don, and the others seconded his motion.

So Jinks cleared his throat and read:

"Did any of you children ever hear of Jenny Lind? Well, she was one of the greatest singers that has ever lived.

"She was born way over in Sweden and began to sing when she was still a child so young as to be termed a baby. Before she was nine years of age she was admitted to the Conservatory and was a public singer and a great favorite before she was twelve.

"Then the little girl had a great sorrow, for she lost her beautiful voice. However, in a few years, it came back suddenly and she sang more beautifully than ever.

"When she was twenty she was made Court Singer, which was a great honor. One evening, after singing at the opera in Vienna, over a thousand people followed her carriage home and she had to come to her window thirty times to

bow to the enthusiastic crowd that continued to applaud her.

"In England Queen Victoria was so delighted with her singing that she wanted to give her many things, but Jenny Lind would only accept a bracelet. This she always prized very highly.

"She gave concerts in America for almost two years and made a great deal of money. And what do you think she did with it? She gave it all to help other people. Some of it she gave to send boys and girls to school. With some she built hospitals and did all sorts of things to make people happy. She sang so beautifully that she was called 'The Swedish Nightingale,' but she did so many lovely things that I am sure if she had lived to-day, she would have been truly called a Blue Bird."

When Jinks concluded, the children smiled happily at their books, for this was the kind of a story they loved to have appear in their magazine.

"Say, Jinks, do you suppose we can get this lady to do some more short articles for us? Maybe she will help in our next magazine?" queried Ned, thoughtfully.

"Does anyone know her address?" asked practical Don.

"Uncle Ben will surely have it! She is a great friend of his, you know," added Ruth.

"We'll ask him to-night when he comes in from town. We will just make a note of this and try to get her to send us something every month!" declared Ned.

"What's the next good story we had given us by the folks at that theatre party?" asked Dot.

"Why, there's that story of the Scottish Poet that was sent in by that nice dark young man who has done so much good work with the children's story hours at the libraries and at the museums. He was the man Mr. Richard chums with, you know!" replied Mete.

"I wonder why he didn't sign his name to this story?" wondered Don, looking over the story in question.

"Oh, I know! He told Uncle Ben that his particular line was botany and nature stories, but he had no time to get one ready at such short notice so he sent us this. He promised to write us a plant story for our next issue," explained Ned.

"Oh, that's fine! Then we can print his name on it, can't we?" cried Ruth, eagerly.

"Yes, but do keep quiet and let Jinks read this one!" admonished Ned.

"Upon the rugged hills of Scotland, a poor shepherd watched his master's flocks; and always in faithful attendance, following closely at James' heels, came the shepherd-dog, Sirrah. At times, the flock numbered as many as several hundred sheep and many lambs and these had to be driven to the pastures upon the hillsides and carefully watched that none might stray.

"Day after day, James and his dog drove the flocks from one grassy pasture to another, but at noon hour the dog was left to watch the grazing sheep while his master ate dinner by a spring and rested under a shady tree.

"One dark night, while James and his dog were on the hill-top with a flock of seven hundred sheep and lambs, a severe storm arose. The wind whistled shrilly and the thunder rolled, while the lightning forked in every direction. The rain poured down heavily and the little lambs grew so frightened that their bleating

made the sheep run hither and thither. Finally they started a stampede, some in one direction and some in another.

"The distracted shepherd boy wandered up and down the hills with lighted lantern in hand calling for his flocks. But no sound or sight could he get of a single sheep. Even the dog seemed to have deserted his master at this awful time.

"Two or three other shepherds were called to help James in the search, but morning came and still there was no sign of the flocks, even though every place where sheep would be likely to take shelter was examined carefully.

"At last, weary and discouraged, James cried, 'It's no use! I must go to the master and report that I have lost the entire flock!'

"So, with heart aching for the dear little lambs he loved and the sheep he had herded so long, James started home.

"He had gone about two miles along the trail when he came to a deep and narrow ravine that ended in a wide pocket-like enclosure between the cliffs; but the approach to this 'pocket' was

by a gradual descent from the hills where the flocks usually fed.

"As he drew near to this ravine, James spied a few lambs gamboling about the bushes. He swung himself out upon a ledge of rock to see if by any possible chance these lambs might belong to him, and there he saw Sirrah standing upon a flat-topped rock, watching over the entire flock. He was patiently waiting for his master's coming to take the sheep away.

"James called eagerly to his two friends and they all hastened to the ravine. Here they counted the sheep and lambs and found every one safe—not one was missing! Then was Sirrah proud. His master praised him for his sagacity and patted his shaggy head again and again.

"But how did the dog manage to gather the flock and hold them in that narrow pocket?

"Only Sirrah can answer that question, and he has left this world of work now. But a shepherd dog is very intelligent and sometimes accomplishes things almost impossible for a human to do.

"This shepherd boy was a born poet and during the solitudes upon the hills, he taught him-

self to read and write so that when he was grown to manhood he wrote poems for others to read and enjoy. He became very famous in time and was known as the 'Scottish Poet,' and many of his verses were written for the children he always loved so well."

Jinks finished the reading and the children applauded the story, then asked each other who had read the poems of the Scottish poet, James Hogg.

"Oh, here's a fine story contributed by the man who founded the Woodcraft League. He knows all about the Indians and he can tell an Indian story better than anyone in the country; at least Uncle Ben says so, 'cause he has heard him heaps of times. Uncle Ben is a member of the League, you know, and he goes to all of the meetings and Councils!" cried Ruth, eagerly.

"Well, s'pose you read this one, Ruth!" said Jinks.

"I can't read as well as you do, Jinks, and maybe the others would rather hear you tell it!" replied Ruth, humbly.

"Oh, pshaw! You can so read it as well as Jinks! Go ahead and begin!" declared Dot.

So Ruth read the legend of the Seneca Peace Queen:

"Sweet as the breath of spring and gentle as a summer zephyr was the young Peace Queen of the Senecas. Her lodge in the forest was ever quiet and restful, for no angry words or quarreling tones were heard there. The forest trail that led thither was well worn, but the great Queen chosen by Hiawatha before his death dwelt alone.

"The vision of Minnehaha came by night and whispered wisdom in the shell-like ears of the Queen and in the morning she arose to comfort the sad, calm the angry, and care for the sick. And as she walked from the lodges of her people, happiness reigned in every heart, for had not their beautiful Queen visited them?

"One morning, as she looked from her lodge-opening, she saw two wrathful braves, one from the Oneida, the other from the Onondaga tribes.

" 'What is wrong with my brothers? Can I

make peace between thee?' asked the Queen gently.

"The Onondaga, a great chief, tall and strong, spoke: 'Peace-Queen, while hunting in the forest, my arrow brought down a buck. As I drew near to take my prize, this brave came through the woods to claim the buck for his own —he says that his arrow slew the trophy. We quarreled and gave trial with skillful weapons, but neither could win, so we came hither.'

"As the Onondaga concluded, the Queen turned toward the Oneida as straight as a young pine with eyes as keen and bright as an eagle's, and said, 'What says the Oneida?'

" 'My brother speaks truth in part, but my arrow shot the buck, not his,' replied the Oneida.

"Then spake the Onondaga eagerly: 'Let the Peace-Queen judge!'

"Chief of the Onondaga, you have spoken well. Divide the buck and take your share to your lodge and give unto the hungry there. The buck is large and the Oneida will have all he may carry to his wife and papooses,' said the Queen.

"The Onondaga bowed his head, but said,

'Peace-Queen, the plague carried away my beloved and none has filled her place since. I ask the maiden before me to come and sit in my lodge and eat venison beside my fire.'

"Then flashed the eyes of the Oneida as he moved to strike down his brother, but the Peace-Queen silenced them with a look as she replied to the Onondaga: 'Many maidens are there who will joyfully sit beside your fire, but I am chosen to be a Peace-Queen to the tribes and cannot be wife to any brave.'

"The Onondaga bowed his head meekly and divided the buck, taking his half away as he went slowly through the forest aisles.

"The Oneida held high his head and watched silently until the Onondaga was lost to sight. Then he turned and approached the young Queen eagerly and was about to speak with ardent words, but the Peace-Queen warned him by saying, 'Go in peace!'

"The handsome youth, however, daringly said, 'The son of the Oneidas sits alone in his wigwam and longs for his bride—will the Peace-Queen come?'

"Then answered the Queen in terms of loving

rebuke: 'The Peace-Queen goes to no man's lodge for wife. Be friends with her and govern your people in peace and wisdom.'

"So the Oneida went alone, but no maiden ever sat in his wigwam and cooked venison for him for he loved the Peace-Queen with a fervent and lasting love.

"The young and beautiful Peace-Queen remained to judge all her people, for she had been chosen by the tribes, but in her heart forever sang the sweet voice of love for the Oneida brave who proved himself a worthy chief of his people."

Ruth finished her reading with a sweet tone of regret sounding for the Queen, and Dot exclaimed, the moment the story ended:

"If I'd been that beautiful young queen, I would have gone with the fine young brave!"

"Not if you had to be a queen and take care of a whole lot of Indians!" retorted her brother Don.

"Well, then I'm glad I'm not a queen," sighed Dot.

"So are we all," laughed Ned, pulling Dot's short hair.

"Is that all the new stuff we were given this month?" asked Tuck Stevens.

"Oh, no, there's heaps more, but we ought to be doing something else besides reading to each other," advised Mete.

"Oh, I don't know! We had such a full day yesterday that we deserve a little lazy time, I think," replied Ned.

"Of course. And, besides, there isn't anything we really can do to-day. Not until Uncle Ben comes home to give us new plans to work on," added Ruth.

"Aunt Selina's chapter of the Civil War story is good, isn't it?" now commented Betty.

"Yes, and the chapter Mrs. Catlin added, too," came from Dot.

"Oh, say, folks! Here's a short story from the secretary of the National Audubon Society!" cried Jinks, as he turned over the pages of his magazine and found the article.

"What page?" eagerly asked some Blue Birds, while others were seeking for the story.

"On page 14, headed 'To Help Our Birds,'" replied Ned.

The article was one that requested all children to start feeding-grounds for birds at their homes or in the school-yards. It explained how simple and safe bird-houses could be made and fastened in trees or on poles or houses. How a bird-bath and feed-trough should be constructed and, above all, to always have a dish or pan of water for the birds, as many of them died of thirst in winter when the streams were frozen over.

He then went on to say how the birds loved to peck at a piece of suet in winter as it kept them warm and healthy. How important it was to scatter grain about the ground as well as in the troughs, for many birds were too timid to come to the trough to feed, but would fly down and snatch a seed from the ground and fly away to eat it. The article concluded with the offer to send patterns and directions of bird-houses and feeding dishes free, if the children would but make them and see that they were erected in places where the birds would nest and feed.

"Say, that's a fine idea, do you know it!" exclaimed Dot, enthusiastically.

"Yes, and I say we ought to start something like this in our Oakdale school at once," added Ruth.

"We will! We'll write for those patterns and directions at once, and begin a Bird Club at school!" declared Ned.

"Here's a short article written by the Welfare Lady," announced Betty.

"It's your turn to read now, Betty," declared Ruth.

"I'm glad it is a short story, then," laughed Betty, as she took her paper over to the window to see the type.

"Dear little Blue Birds: I am going to tell you the true story of a little girl in the slums of the city. Maybe you will meet her soon and find out how much she can enjoy the outing you propose giving the children. Personally, I wish to have Pauline go to the country and see something other than the work she has always to attend to.

"Little Pauline never heard of Blue Birds, or had any happy time in her life, for she has had

to earn her own living ever since she can remember.

"Pauline is eight years old and she stands upon a wet, slimy ground from four o'clock in the morning until four or five in the evening, shucking oysters. Sometimes, she has to begin work at three o'clock—just when other little girls are cuddling down closer under downy blankets to keep out the raw chill of an early winter's dawn.

"Pauline's clothes are not sufficient to keep out cold or rain, and the shacks where she has to work have wide cracks in the walls, through which the piercing cold enters and the wailing wind whistles to make one shiver.

"The sharp oyster shells, partly opened by steaming, must be separated with a knife and the contents dropped into a pot that hangs at Pauline's side. This little girl receives five cents for each pot filled, the pot holding about four pounds of oysters. Work as hard as she possibly can, Pauline, or any other little child—they range from five to ten years of age—can never fill more than four pots a day, so that makes twenty cents a day each quick worker may earn. You see, my

little Blue Birds and Bobolinks, twenty cents a day does not allow the little worker much spending money after a bed and something to eat is paid for. Scarcely anything is left for clothes, and not a cent for pleasure or outing. This is why I take such a great interest in your club that is destined to help so many 'Little Citizens.'

"Some of the younger children who work in this oyster factory, work hard all day and fill only two pails. That pays them ten cents a day; and for all this labor, standing in cold, wet places, tired and bruised, with cut hands and fingers, our Little Citizens can hardly earn enough to buy a big hot dish of good soup—without a cent for anything else.

"And this is one of the awful mistakes our great United States is making—to permit its Little Citizens to work and kill themselves without help of any kind. This is why the National Child Labor Committee is trying to show the people that children are far more important than oysters or shrimps. And this is why I am heartily interested in seeing your club succeed in its undertaking, for you are on the right track.

"If you wish me to write any new true stories

of the little workers who slave for a living, or if I can help you in any way, I will gladly do so. Just address me at the headquarters of the Child Welfare Organization, East 22nd Street, New York City."

"My! how awful!" breathed Ruth when Betty finished the letter.

"I never dreamed it was as bad as all that!" exclaimed Jinks.

"Nor I," added Ned, seriously.

"Say, can't we do something right away?" cried Dot.

"Children, I think we are doing the right thing," came a voice from the doorway, where stood Mrs. Talmage and Aunt Selina.

"Did you hear this letter, mother?" cried Ruth.

"Yes, but we have read it before and I had a talk with the writer of the letter; she says our little magazine will get into homes and show kind-hearted folks just what is going on, and in this way we are doing far more to help all societies of benevolence than if we were sending money or clothes."

"I see! Then it's up to each one of us to keep

our little magazine and its stories so good and interesting that everyone will want to read it the moment it reaches them," declared Ned, sensibly.

"That's just it! Some of the great-hearted people who met you at the Garden last night fear you will soon lose interest in this pastime of publishing, and, as so many children do, shirk the work and merely pat down the articles any old way, as long as you can say they are printed," commented Mrs. Talmage.

The big boys flared up at that and some of the Blue Birds cried: "You denied that, I hope!"

"I told them that you fully understood the responsibility of the work, and the boys took the keenest delight in the printing, and that as each one of you enjoyed the plans of helping others there was little danger of an immediate suspension of the periodical," smiled Mrs. Talmage.

"And I told them that even if the Blue Birds and Bobolinks quit publishing, I would personally obligate myself to go on with the paper, as it was in such a worthy cause. Then Uncle Ben came up and said, 'I'll have something to say about that, too, as this has been my pet child for years and years. If it is ever found necessary,

I will resign from all other work and devote myself to this magazine as long as there is a need for such a paper to be issued.' Of course that gave everyone confidence, for your Uncle Ben is known to do exactly as he says he will," said Aunt Selina.

"Hurrah for Aunt Selina and Uncle Ben, say I!" shouted Don, at this moment.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" came from every young throat there and the noise was so deafening that both Aunt Selina and Mrs. Talmage ran from the barn.

CHAPTER IV

THE WINTER OUTING

The week following the Christmas Treat at the Garden was so filled with important work that not one of the Blue Birds had time to wonder whether the day would be clear or the snow would last for the anticipated party.

The articles and stories for the ensuing month's issue of the magazine had to be carefully read and arranged, and Uncle Ben again insisted upon having the manual labor of printing and binding done in the city, whence the wrapped magazines could be mailed.

"Uncle Ben, this makes two times since we have really printed our paper, and maybe you will ask us to give it up again," grumbled Ned, who liked the fun of printing.

"Oh, no, indeed! If you saw the bills I had to pay for the work done on the Christmas number, you wouldn't fear my doing this thing very often," laughed Uncle Ben.

"Why, that's so! You had to pay someone for that work!" exclaimed Dot Starr, suddenly realizing what it must have cost.

"Did you fancy that city printers work for fun?" quizzed Jinks.

"Aside from costs and such things, it is really the only thing to do with this issue, children. You must take charge of this winter outing for Little Citizens, and the magazine ought to come out on time, too. As both important matters cannot be properly done by you, it is best to let the least important be done by hired help—hence my decision," said Uncle Ben.

"Well, Uncle Ben knows what he is talking about, so I say that we let him do it and help him all we can by keeping our complaints to ourselves," declared Don, frank as usual.

"Second that motion!" laughed Mete, and so Uncle Ben was told to act as he thought best in the interests of the work.

From the day after Christmas until the day of the outing, boxes and huge packages arrived at the Oakdale express office, until the agent declared that the railroad would have to build him

a new baggage office if the amount of shipping continued in such volume.

But every one of these boxes was addressed to Blue Birds or "Little Citizens' Outing," care of Mossy Glen, Oakdale. And when the boxes were opened in the Publishing House, they contained all colors and grades of mittens, leggings, sweaters, hoods, and a big knitting mill sent a hundred knitted vests to wear under coats or wraps.

"Uncle Ben, what a wise old man you are!" cried Don Starr the night before the outing, when the club had finished unpacking the last box to arrive that afternoon.

"Now what?" laughed Uncle Ben, pinching Don's ear.

" 'Cause you must have known this barn would be so filled with goods that there wouldn't be a speck of room for printing," returned Don, pointing proudly at the tiers of woolen goods piled all around the walls of the publishing headquarters.

"Cross my heart, I didn't! I thought of the time it would take to plan for the sports and the going about the countryside to ask for the loans

of sleds and bobs, or skates, but I quite forgot the room these donations would take," said Uncle Ben.

"Well, 'all's well that ends well,' Uncle Ben, and so far everything has ended far beyond our expectations!" declared Ned.

"And all we have to do now is to meet the ten-forty train at the station in Oakdale," added Ruth.

"How about the hot cocoa and biscuits the Grownups are going to serve here in the barn?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Oh, that's their affair! We haven't bothered about it at all. Aunt Selina sent to a ten-cent store in New York and bought many grosses of cheap spoons—I think they were ten cents a dozen, just made for picnics—and hundreds of drinking cups made of pressed pulp, and so cheap that they could be thrown away when once used. All that arrived by express yesterday. Mother and Mrs. Starr got the cocoa and Mrs. Catlin drove around the country and bought up enough cream to use," Ned explained.

"And you children think you have enough bobs

and hand-sleighs to accommodate a crowd?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Yes, because you see a lot of children will prefer riding in the big straw-filled farm sleighs drawn by horses, to coasting down the hill. In fact, mother says all of the youngest children should go in the big horse-sleds and leave the coasting for the older children," said Ruth.

"Yes, your mother is right. We will see that that plan is carried out," replied Uncle Ben, thoughtfully.

"How about the skating, Uncle Ben? The big lake is all frozen over and the river is quite safe, but we couldn't borrow as many pairs of skates as we thought we could," said Jinks.

"To tell the truth, Jinks, I doubt if many of these city children can skate, and I'm sure not many of them would want to use their precious day in learning to skate. For those who can and wish to skate, you probably will have enough pairs to go around."

That night at the Talmage home, Uncle Ben heard that most of the ladies of Oakdale had offered their services in taking care of the crowd

of city children and see that all were properly cared for during the outing.

First, the half-clad youngest ones were to be cozily dressed in the warm garments provided, and then they would be snugly tucked in farm-sleighs filled with straw and sent off on a real joy-ride across the snow-covered country.

Next, the older children would be warmly robed and permitted to coast or slide or skate to their heart's content.

Hot cocoa and biscuits were to be had for the asking at the barn, so that no one need feel hungry or chilly during the day. Then at one o'clock, great bowls of hot beef-stew and bread and butter would be served to everyone, the children coming in installments to eat their portion.

At three o'clock all would march back to the trains that brought them out and this would complete a wonderful day in the white-covered country where snow-battles, coasting and skating was the rule, instead of the city's dirty, slippery sidewalks, slushy roadways where horses slipped and fell, and everybody got wet feet.

Uncle Ben had asked the Oakdale Band to be

present at the arrival of the train the morning of the outing, and this gave a festive air to the entire procedure. All the little publishers were on hand at the station to welcome the Little Citizens.

It was with great surprise, then, that the Blue Birds and Bobolinks found the brass band waiting at the railroad station to welcome the city children. Uncle Ben was there talking to the leader, and the moment he saw the club walking towards the station he hurried out to meet them.

"I have an idea! You all know how the children liked to sing and march to the Garden on Christmas Day—well, as long as the band is here to lead us to Mossy Glen, why not have the children form in line and sing as they march along from here to the publishing house where the clothes are kept? This will keep them all moving in step and interest them enough to keep them from lagging behind or feeling cold."

"You're right, Uncle Ben—as you always are," agreed Ned, eagerly, while all the others declared it was a fine idea.

When the train pulled in, several prominent people who had been present at the Blue Bird

party in New York stepped off and greeted the children.

"Do you know, we had to come in two sections —there are so many little ones eager to spend a day in the country!" exclaimed the secretary of the Audubon Society.

"And the railroad company had to hustle to find extra coaches to carry the second division," added the secretary of the Woodcraft League.

"Will they all get here?" worried Ruth, lest some be deprived of their fun.

"Oh, yes, but they will arrive at least twenty minutes later—they were all being marshalled into the cars when we pulled out of the terminal," replied the Welfare lady.

"We left our Big Chief and Mrs. Remington with the second section, with Mr. Richards and his friends to keep order. Now, shall we start off and leave room for the arrival of the other division?" said Mr. Fagus.

"The Band can't march this section to Mossy Glen and get back in time for the second half, and besides we have arranged to have a big moving picture company stand at the corner of Main Street and take pictures as we all march

past. Some other plan must be devised to keep the entire party together," said Uncle Ben with a frown in his forehead.

The Bobolinks felt that they must relieve Uncle Ben of such a care and they drew together to discuss ways and means.

"We'll take the boys over in that empty lot and play a sham battle while the rest of you folks take care of the girls," finally suggested Ned, coming up to the perplexed men.

"That's fine! I tell you it takes a boy to think up stunts!" laughed Mr. Fagus. Then he called to all of the boys who stood idly about wondering why they were not doing something.

"Uncle Ben, here, has engaged a moving-picture man to take our pictures as we march up Main Street, boys, but we are not ready to start right off as we must wait for the second train to come in with the rest of our party. We expect to have these moving pictures shown in every theatre on the company's circuit, and to every boy who recognises himself in the parade we are going to give a prize of some sort. Now, as we may have to wait a few minutes for the second train to arrive, the Bobolink boys have

suggested that you all pile over that fence and choose sides for a sham battle in the snow. We big ones will umpire and the girls can watch from the roadside."

Uncle Ben smiled as he heard the quick interpretation given the plan by Mr. Fagus, and the boys shouted gayly as they rushed for the rail fence dividing the road from the vacant field.

With many hands at work, a snow wall was soon erected and the boys chose sides for the battle. The age and size of the combatants were decided by the men in charge of the fun and the battle was raging at full tilt when the whistle of an engine was heard at the bend in the road, and soon the second division arrived and began unloading.

There were twenty-seven cars in all and each car was crowded, so Oakdale saw such a multitude of city children as it never expected to in all of its existence.

The visitors soon heard of Uncle Ben's wish to have them march and sing, and so popular was he with all city waifs that they would have marched through fire had he so desired of them. As it was, this request was going to mean a lot

of fun, for the brass band would go in front and the movie man would take pictures of them as they passed by.

Oakdale people had taken care to have all of the walks clean and dry for the march, as it was possible that some of the little ones might have worn-out shoes or perhaps shoes full of holes. And such was the case with many of the poor mites!

If only Arthur Farwell, the man who wrote the fine marching song, could have seen the joy and gladness with which all of the poor children sang his song and marched along the village street, he would have thanked the Great Spirit for the gift given him to create harmony in the hearts of fellow-beings.

Once arrived at Mossy Glen, the older children found ample entertainment in snow-balling or sliding on sheets of ice that covered the green lawns here and there. But everyone was expected to come to the barn and be provided with such items of warm clothing as was found necessary; thus, the little ones who had on leaky shoes were given arctics to wear over their cold feet, and shivering thin bodies were soon feeling warm

in sweaters and leggings, while almost every child had a pair of mittens and a knitted cap bestowed upon him.

"Uncle Ben! Here come the farm-sleds for the little ones," shouted Don, spying the line of huge sleighs coming in at the gateway of Mossy Glen.

That brought almost every child within hearing and in a short time the younger ones were laughing and singing as they were driven away on a cross-country sleigh-ride.

The others were soon off with bob-sleds and coasters to ride down the hills near Mossy Glen, while some of the older boys and girls preferred to try the skates.

So far, the entire plan had succeeded far beyond most sanguine hopes, for it was seldom that a great crowd of children of all ages and conditions and races, should meet and pass a whole day without a mishap. But Uncle Ben was devoutly praying that such might be the case.

The cook from the Starr's, one from Catlin's, and the cook from Talmage's arrived at the barn at twelve to begin on the stew and preparing the bread and butter. The beef and other

ingredients had been well-cooked all morning and now remained to be seasoned and served.

Uncle Ben was just returning to the barn after having watched a snow-fight between some boys, when Don rushed madly along the drive towards him.

"Unc' Ben! Unc' Ben! Come quick! Someone got hurted awful bad!" Don was so breathless from running that he could say no more, but he pointed toward the long road that ran down the hill from Catlin's house.

Without waiting to hear more, Uncle Ben ran off, and Don went to the barn to rest and have a cup of cocoa for his troubles.

It was to be seen that something had happened on Catlin's hill, for a big crowd of children were standing about in a circle. Uncle Ben ran across lots and soon reached the foot of the hill and called to the children:

"What is it? Who's hurt?"

Everyone wished to explain how it had happened, yet no one was sure how it did happen. All they could say was that sleds were flying down and children were climbing up, shouting, laughing and calling to each other, when sud-

denly this little boy rolled over on the snow and some sleds went on flying down. Whether he was struck by one or not, they could not say.

Uncle Ben dropped upon his knees and quickly ascertained that the heart beat; then he examined the fragile little body and found no sign of bruise or scratch. From the blueness of the lips and the extreme thinness of the face and body, he judged that the boy was starved and the undue excitement had merely caused him to faint. So he gathered up the light little burden in his strong arms and started off for the house with him, turning to relieve the fear of the others by saying: "He's all right—only fainted from exhaustion and excitement. The rest of you had better take things quieter or another one will tumble over as this little fellow has."

At the house a hot drink soon revived the boy and he confessed to Uncle Ben that he had had nothing to eat for two days as he had saved the cost of his food to pay another chap to take care of his newspaper route for the day.

Ned had entered the room just in time to overhear the confession and Uncle Ben glanced up at him. Uncle and nephew exchanged glances

that said much for their future partnership in working for the welfare of the poor children in the city.

Jakie—that was the boy's name—was only nine years of age, but he had a pitiable story to tell.

"Me father is behind the bars at Sing Sing an' me mother died las' year. So all me little sister Minnie has to take care ov her is mesilf. I tries to make a honest livin' wid me papers and doin' odd jobs, but it hain't no cinch, let me tell yeh!

"Minnie kin go to kindergarten school, where they gives her a hot dinner at noon, but I has to keep goin' in bisnis er there ain't nuttin' to pay th' rent, yeh see!"

"Do you manage to pay the rent for both of you?" asked Ned, astonished.

"Where do you live?" added Uncle Ben.

"Well, dis las' mont' we has hed to live in Mis' Haggerty's bunk, 'cause I couldn't pay fer Tim's corner anny more. I ust to pay Tim fifty cents a week for the corner, but I onny pays this Haggerty woman twenty cents a week for our bunk. Sis says she don't like the Haggerty woman

'cuss she's always drinkin' and swearin' so I mus' try to find another bunk!" sighed the boy.

"What do you mean by a bunk?" asked Ned.

"Oh, jes' a box in a corner filled with straw and a quilt to cover both of us at night," replied Jake, as if such conditions were everyday affairs.

Ned was speechless and Uncle Ben continued, "Where was the corner with Tim?"

"Oh, we had a hull corner of an attic room wid him! Sis could play wid a rag doll or keep her stuff made at kindergarten in her own corner at Tim's, but we can't have ennything at this Haggerty's bunk," explained Jake.

As the boy was quite refreshed by the hot drink and big bowl of beef stew given him, he ran out to get all of the fun he could that day, having paid so dearly for it. Uncle Ben sat still with bowed head and clasped hands, while Ned stood at his side silently thinking. At last Ned placed a hand on the older man's head and both of them sighed.

"My boy, I have one great consolation in all of this misery of the world. You and I are doing our mite to relieve it and so are the others. Some day everyone will want to help others.

These conditions will be no longer, for we shall not have excessively rich folks any more than we shall have miserably poor ones. Then shall we begin to taste real joy and happiness!"

"Uncle Ben, it makes me feel sick to think of the way we live and spend money, and then hear this boy's heart-breaking story. A little will do so much for him!" cried Ned.

"You must not grow morbid over this tale, Ned. There are so many thousands right in New York as bad and even worse than Jake's case. You could not help everyone even if you sacrificed all of your father's wealth to do so. But we are doing the best we can with the goods God gave us, and until the whole world awakes to find out that the happiness of every individual is in the keeping of another's happiness, we must be patient and work.

"In using your money and means in this magazine and thus bringing to the attention of others the crying need of their fellow-men, you are doing the best you can. Every individual effort helps the whole mass, but it will need the help of everyone to lift the world out of the present conditions.

"So don't let your gaze lower to the pitiful case of this one boy, but keep your eyes on the great ultimate to be reached finally by work and earnest endeavor. Meantime, the fact that Jake told us his story will be the means of sending relief to him through our welfare friend whose work this is. But, as I said before, our work is not with an individual case, but with the entire condition which needs to be healed of its gruesome symptoms."

Ned felt much better after this talk, and uncle and nephew went out again to see what more could be done to help make the day a perfect one for the little city children.

The very manner in which they all ate their beef stew showed that palatable food was a luxury with these children, and bowls were passed back for second helpings the moment Mrs. Talmage said there was plenty to go round again.

When the hot lunch was over, some of the children ran out again to enjoy the coasting and sliding, while some of the quieter ones remained in the barn to hear the elders talk and plan.

As soon as the dishes and pots were carried

away to the house to be washed, Mr. Fagus came in and looked about.

"I was wondering if these little ones would like to hear our Big Chief tell a story? Something true and fine!"

Of course the children shouted that they would like it, so the Big Chief had to get up and speak whether he felt like it or not.

"Since Mr. Fagus suggested that I tell an Indian story, and you have all accepted his proposition, I will tell you a short one called "The Thunders." This story comes in a book of legends issued by the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, and is considered authentic of the Tlingit Myths.

"A high-caste girl who had four brothers went out of her lodge one morning and stepped on a snail.

" 'Oh, you nasty thing! There isn't a time when I go out but that this snail is around the house.'

"That evening a youth of about her own age came to the girl and she went away with him.

"When the people found that she had disappeared they searched everywhere for her, for they did not know what had become of her. Her brothers also hunted everywhere, but for a long time without result.

"Some distance behind the village was a high, perpendicular cliff without a tree or a bush on it, and half way up they at last saw their sister with a very large snail coiled about her. They ran about underneath and called to her to throw herself down, but she could not. She was stuck there.

"After this the four brothers tried some way of flying. They tried one kind of wood after another and also bone for wings, but in vain, for after they had flown a short distance they always dropped down again.

"Finally, they employed yellow cedar and the first time they used it they got half way up to the place where their sister was, and the second time they reached her and dragged her down, leaving the snail still there.

"But the four brothers now left their own village, for they said their sister had disgraced them, and they became the Thunders. When

they move their wings you hear the thunder, and when they wink you see the lightning.

"At the time when these four brothers first went away the people at their father's village were starving, so they flew out over the ocean, caught a whale and brought it to the town that it might be found next morning. So the people claimed that the Thunders are powerful and can get anything.

"After they had satisfied the famine of their people, the four Thunders left the world and ascended to the sky where they have lived ever since."

The Big Chief finished his story just as Uncle Ben blew the great horn for all of the children to assemble at the barn. The brass band came to lead the children back to the railway station and soon all were marching out of Mossy Glen towards the waiting cars that would soon be whirling them back to the city. At the train, the Grownups in charge of the multitude thanked the Blue Birds and Bobolinks for a very happy day.

CHAPTER V

LITTLE CITIZENS' STORIES

The last car had passed out of sight around the curve when the Blue Birds looked at each other and sighed.

"Well, that's over!" declared Dot.

"No, only begun," replied Mrs. Talmage.

"What do you mean?" chorused some of the little girls.

"Why, if the story I heard to-day be true, this outing is but the beginning of a great work. A poor little deformed child told me such a tale as would touch a heart of flint. I will tell you about it as soon as we reach the house.

"It seems interesting that you have a story to tell, for I, too, have one—Ned and I heard one that I thought had no equal," came from Uncle Ben.

"Really! Why, it seems we all heard one, then. For I was made the confidant of a little

girl who told me her life-story and it far surpassed the Pauline of the Welfare Workers. I thought I would write it all down for the next issue of the magazine," said Mrs. Starr, wonderingly.

Of course everyone looked at everyone else and expressed great interest. Then Ned remarked, "I guess every one of those Little Citizens here to-day could tell a tale that would make luxury-loving folks sit up and take notice."

The automobiles were waiting to carry the children and their parents back to Mossy Glen, and soon everyone was sitting about the cozy big fire in the wide chimney-piece of the library.

Aunt Selina had not gone to the station with the party, but the moment she heard the voices of the children who were returning to the house, she hurried downstairs with her face aglow with interest.

"What do you people think? I heard *such* a touching story from a little fellow not more than seven years old that I felt I must write it down to appear in our next magazine. As it is a true story, many people may be roused to help along our work."

Again everyone looked at each other and Uncle Ben said, "Why, Flutey, we all got a story from these children, it appears. Ned and I heard one from the little boy who fainted on the hillside, and the others heard similar pathetic tales from other little ones. I believe it will be a splendid idea to print all of them in our magazine and make it a rule to try and get a few true stories every month. It will surely create some heart-interest!"

"Tell us about the little boy who fainted, Uncle Ben," cried Ruth, eagerly.

So Uncle Ben, assisted by Ned, told the story of the little newsboy. Then Aunt Selina was called upon to relate her tale.

"Why, it appears that this little Jim lives in one of those awful cellar-holes near the old Brooklyn Bridge. He is a bootblack stationed near the concourse of the Municipal Buildings. But he is not in business for himself—he works for a dreadful man who has from fifteen to twenty bootblacks assigned him. This man, in turn, is hired by a foreigner who hires more than a score of such slave-drivers. The Boss, as they call him, provides the shoe-boxes, brushes

and blacking, and pays the drivers for looking after the boys. Each boy agrees to live in the lodging the driver finds and for this the boy pays an excessive rental. He has to find his own food, however, and very little money is left with which to buy victuals after the room-rent is paid to the driver. Each boy receives a small pittance for his day's work and the balance of the proceeds goes to the driver, who takes his share and turns over the remainder to the Boss.

"Jim told me that ten little bootblacks live in this horrible hole of a cellar and the filthy rags they sleep upon and the wharf rats that run all over the hole make it impossible for them to rest after a hard day's work for the Driver. Consequently, the weaker ones of the gang generally succumb to disease and are carted away by the ambulance.

"I told Jim that such conditions were against the law and all he had to do was to report it to the authorities or to a policeman. And I wish you could have seen that child's knowing look of pity for my ignorance.

"Why, from what he hinted to me, I should judge that the police do know of the Drivers'

methods. Of course one cannot take this for granted on the strength of a boy's story, but he did seem so honest and indifferent to anything concerning himself that I felt he had experienced some very hard knocks.

"I asked him where his parents were and he said he never knew of any. From as early a day as he could remember, he was considered the property of this particular Driver.

"Then I asked him if the Driver allowed him to come to this party, and the boy laughed mirthlessly.

" 'Nah! I'll git the strap fer runnin' away to-day, all right. But I don't care—I've hed the time of me life!'

"I gave the little fellow a five-dollar bill and told him not to go back to the Driver but to use the money for a decent place uptown until I could communicate with him. In the meantime he is to try to find work as an errand boy."

As Aunt Selina concluded her story Uncle Ben looked at her and said, "Flutey, did you stop to think that not even an errand boy can secure work without references? Who will give Jim the references he needs? And where will he find

suitable clothes in which to appear properly when he applies for work?"

Aunt Selina gasped. "Oh, Ben, I never thought of all those things. Dear me, can't we do something to help him?"

"Well, you've all heard the story about my newsboy, now let us hear Mother-Wings' story before we talk things over," said Uncle Ben.

"My little girl is hired by a junk man, who sends her out to dig in the bags of waste paper that are placed on the city walks for the rubbish man to collect. She has to pick out all the rags and thrust them in the bag that she carries over her back, and all other rubbish that can be utilized in some way—for instance, she collects old rubbers, leather, bits of metal, etc. For this, she is given a mattress and so-called food. She is not old enough to demand any pay for her services and her clothing is picked up out of the rubbish she sorts.

"I was so moved by her story that I took her to the house and found a dress and coat, besides shoes and a hat of Ruth's. It was too large for her emaciated frame, but I thought it was far better than what she had on.

"The little thing could hardly believe they were to be given her and she cried out as she hugged them to her as if they were alive.

" 'But, oh, Lady, he will take them all away from me and sell them to a dealer!' wailed the child.

"I gasped for a moment, for I couldn't believe it. Then I began to understand how completely in the power of these slave-drivers were these poor little ones who had no kin or means to help them through life.

" 'What will you do then, Ally?' I asked the child.

" 'I kin hock 'em and save 'em fer myself 'til I kin git away from Jacobs, er I kin hide 'em somewhere—I don' know jus' where, yit!'

" 'Don't you think it will be better to wear the shoes and coat and let me keep the other things for you until you know what to do with them? I can take down your address and you can take mine, you see, and we can communicate with each other about it,' said I.

"Then I found that Ally couldn't read or spell or write, and never attended school. I was so sure that the city authorities made every child

attend school part of the day that I suspected Ally of fibbing or of playing truant. But she soon undeceived me. I learned that hundreds of children who had to slave for others were never even heard from as far as the Board of Education was concerned. Boys and girls who had parents registered by the census takers were compelled to go to school, but the slum children, who had never known parents or had had them taken to prison or the morgue, were seldom included in the census. I suppose they are classed with the dogs!" said Mrs. Talmage, bitterly.

"Well, thank goodness, my story is not as harrowing as the others we have heard, but it is just as pitiful. The little girl, Mary Cofey, is almost twelve and is the sole support of a large family. They live in a tiny hovel of two rooms built right under one of the great city gas-tanks. The father is half silly since he received a blow on the head some years ago while working on a loft building. He was a good mason and made sufficient wages to support his family comfortably.

"Mrs. Cofey takes in washing to eke out the girl's wages of $3 per week. In the bakery where

she is employed, she washes the bake-tins in the cellar, cleans the floors twice a day, and helps generally at other times. She works from six in the morning until nine at night. There is no eight hour law for our children, I find. Nor is there any law to control their pay. Yet these little ones are more conscientious and willing in their work than the Grownups.

"Last summer, during the scourge of infantile paralysis, two of the nine Cofey children were smitten. They survived death but are helplessly crippled. They should be taken care of, but no one can trust the father to do anything dependable, and the worn-out mother must look after the rest of the family as well as care for the little sufferers. Mary managed to beg off this day from her work at the bakery, but she will have to be 'docked' she told me. I gave her some money for her mother and promised to send them a trunk filled with things from the children at home which will be just right for the different sizes of the Cofey children.

"I have been thinking how feasible a plan it would be to move the Cofey family out to Oakdale and let Mary work in our nice clean bakery

here, while Mrs. Cofey could find plenty of charing to do for families about the town. In such a quiet village the father could care for the children, and the air will help the little ones so much."

When Mrs. Starr finished her story, everyone sat with serious faces, thinking of all they had heard during the last half hour.

Finally Mrs. Talmage cried, "Well, what *can* we do?"

"It comes right back to my first idea and as I told Ned this afternoon. We have only heard the stories of the few children we happened to come in personal contact with to-day. If every one of these children who attended this winter party could tell you their story you would find some even more harrowing than the ones we have told just now, and some who are so brave in their experiences that a strong man would tremble at the idea of enduring what many of these children do.

"And don't forget this: The number of poor children we gathered about us in the Garden was very small in comparison to the number of children in New York who had not heard of the

Tree of Light, or who could not steal away to attend it. Now, multiply the number who must be in New York, by every large city in the land and you can never count the grand total.

"Why, children, in our benevolent institutions alone, not including these waifs who elude the homes and asylums, there are one million one hundred and twenty thousand inmates under fifteen years of age. These are cared for by organized charity and do not come directly under the class we have had with us to-day.

"If we should attempt to count up the masses of children left destitute and hopeless by this war in Europe, we would be staggered at the awful picture placed before our imagination. So I believe more than ever that salvation to a certain degree is to be found by working for the masses and not for the individuals.

"By doing your level best in the little magazine and publishing each month a department for Welfare which will arouse the heart-interest of your benevolent readers, you will accomplish more than giving all of your time and attention to helping a few cases that come directly under your notice. Stick to the idea that is bound to

reach thousands. Make this magazine most readable for others, with good pictures and good reading matter, and keep your welfare work within the bounds devoted to it, so that your readers will not feel that you are selling them charity or always begging for their help. Let each come and lend help of his own free will. We know that our sole purpose in publishing the magazine is to help lift the miseries of poor children, and to interest everyone we can reach in helping on with the work."

As Uncle Ben concluded his plan, his hearers could not but feel that he was right.

"Well, after this day's experience I shall do my very best to reach folks through the magazine," declared Ned.

"So'll we all!" cried the others, while Uncle Ben nodded his head approvingly.

"Had we not better get started on a good February issue?" asked Mrs. Talmage.

"I was going to suggest that. The January number is taken care of, but we must stir up the dozing public in February, for folks seem to grow lazy in their benevolent work just as soon

as the spirit of Christmas fades away," replied Uncle Ben.

"We ought to work ahead, too, to catch up on our time, so we can mail our magazines before the first of every month like the real big publishers do!" declared Jinks.

"Yes, we ought to be as prompt with our little paper as others are with theirs. It is good business, too," added Ned.

"Have you made any plans for February?" asked Uncle Ben.

The children shook their heads.

"You see, Uncle Ben, we were so full of this outing that we gave no thought to anything else. We knew we would have plenty of time to work once this was out of the way," said Ruth.

"Well, I think I can suggest a novel plan, then," ventured Uncle Ben.

Then he proceeded to outline a plan for the next issue of the magazine.

"You can make it a 'Valentine Number' and offer to send a valentine to any child who wants one. You can do it in this way: Let a sender place a valentine in a sealed envelope which has a two-cent stamp pasted in the right hand cor-

ner. No address is to appear on the envelope, but the sender may send a little note or an address of his own inside the envelope with the valentine so the receiver will know who it is from and can write and thank the sender. In this way many hundreds of children will get in touch with each other and great good may result from direct communication of a wealthy child with a poor one. Why, if every well-to-do child in this country were to look after and help one poor child, we would have more than enough help to completely do away with poverty and suffering.

"In this valentine scheme we will take the valentines which are sealed in blank envelopes and address an envelope to every child we know of who will be happy to get one. We can mail bundles of them to matrons of homes and hospitals and ask them to write a name on each envelope before distributing them, so the receiver will feel that it was meant for his own individual self. We can count up the number of children in the benevolent homes by referring to our book that came from Washington."

"Oh, I think Uncle Ben's idea is great!" cried Ruth, clapping her hands.

"Yes, indeed, and maybe lots of poor children will get acquainted with children who will help them," added Dot.

As everyone agreed that Uncle Ben's plan was a good one and perfectly simple to handle, they completed arrangements for valentines to be received and sent out again. Then Aunt Selina made a motion.

"I have been thinking of this February issue, and the other day the idea came to me to have some good George Washington and Abraham Lincoln stories in it, as both these birthdays come in February, you know."

"Flutey has a good idea! I quite forgot those two important holidays in my plan for St. Valentine Day!" exclaimed Uncle Ben.

"What more would Flutey suggest?" asked Mrs. Starr.

"Why, I hadn't thought of the valentines, you see, but I did think it would be nice if we could manage in some way to distribute little cards in the hospitals and orphanages, each card bearing a verse about Lincoln and Washington, and having a little American flag pinned in one corner."

"Oh, Flutey's idea is very good! Can't we do it?" cried Dot.

"Goodness me! If we have to address thousands of valentines before February fourteenth, how are we ever going to see about these cards. The suggestion is so dear that I hate to pass it by, but do let Uncle Ben give us advice about time," laughed Mrs. Catlin, anxiously.

"Hum! Let me see!" murmured Uncle Ben, puckering his forehead in deep thought.

After a few moments, he smiled.

"Why would it be necessary to make up cards to give to each child in these institutions? Why not have a patriotic cover design on our magazine of the American flag draped over two oval pictures—one of Lincoln and one of Washington? Then we could have appropriate stories and articles fitted to the birthdays of these two great men, and send out copies of the magazines to the sick children instead of little cards. They will surely have more delight in receiving a magazine of their own than in having a little card."

The suggestion was received with great satisfaction, and Aunt Selina said, "I knew Ben could help us out in some way!"

"Say, Uncle Ben, that valentine scheme ought to be mentioned in this January number. It will be too late to do anything with it if we do not mention it before the February magazines go out!" reminded Ned.

"Yes, that's true. I will telephone in a notice at once, for the printers may be working on night shifts now," replied Uncle Ben, going out of the room to telephone.

During his absence Mrs. Catlin mentioned an idea she had had before the Christmas Treat in the Garden.

"After our theatre party in New York, I did a lot of thinking about ways and means we might use to interest the thoughtless public in the welfare work for children. Then one morning, I had to go up in the attic of my house to find some papers that were in an old desk of father's, and I came across a trunk full of old-fashioned silk dresses and other things worn way back in the days of the Civil War. Suddenly, it flashed through my mind that these well-preserved old costumes were worth a great deal to some collector, and the proceeds could be given to help our work along.

"From this thought, I drifted to the idea of having some motion picture company use them in Aunt Selina's Civil War story. They could pay us royalties for the story and for the use of the costumes.

"Then my thoughts jumped to the plan I have been thinking over. I thought how fine it would be if we could write a story with enough interest to make some motion picture company produce it for us and show it on the screens all over the country. The Blue Birds and Bobolinks could represent the poor little waifs of the city streets, and show how they live and are badgered about. If this play could be shown with the explanation that it was done to arouse the public to systematic help and coöperation with welfare workers to relieve the conditions of the little ones, it might do a world of good."

"Why, Mrs. Catlin! *Why* haven't you spoken of this before? It is great!" cried Uncle Ben, who had entered the door in time to hear the plan mentioned.

"We have had so much of everything crowded upon us these past two weeks that my idea took second place, I suppose," smiled Mrs. Catlin.

"Now, see here, children! The printer in New York will take care of inserting the notice for the valentines so that is off our minds for the time. Here's a fine idea. We will start a serial story for motion pictures in our February number. We will concoct a plot and write a scenario of a good play and I will offer it to some editors I know well, who are now associated with big picture companies.

"I know they will be glad to produce it if the story has an interesting plot and purpose. We already have the purpose and now we must find a plot. Bring in all of the things we heard the children tell us to-day—and more too, in a heart-thrilling story. Now, we've struck the right keynote."

The Blue Birds and Bobolinks were so enthused over the latest plan to help the children, that everything else was forgotten for the time being.

"I see I shall have to continue to commute longer than I had intended, for this play must be done well and without loss of time. A big producing company at Fort Lee will do it for us before they begin their spring and summer out-

doors work:—Then, every company is rushed with pictures and will not give us the consideration we can demand at the present season."

"Do you really mean that we will all be in movies?" cried Don Starr, sceptically.

"Of course!" retorted Ned.

"Oh!" gasped Don, who had had a secret ambition to be a second Charley Chaplin, but felt he must await the proper time before leaving home to offer his talents to some eager manager.

"Maybe Don had better not take part—he is sure to ruin reels and reels of film!" teased Mete.

"I just guess not! If you are to act in a picture, when everyone knows what an old slowpoke you are, I just bet I can act, too!" snapped Don, emphatically.

So the Blue Birds and Bobolinks parted with the advice from Uncle Ben to think out a good movie story.

CHAPTER VI

THE MOTION PICTURE PLAY

For several days after the plan was made to write a motion picture play, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks could be seen posing in all kinds of queer places and positions.

Every day a new scene was suggested to the ladies who had offered to write the play for the children, until there was enough material on hand to make a serial, five reels a week, for the space of a year's time.

But out of all the thrilling episodes suggested, and the heart-throb ideas described by the children, enough of really good stuff was selected to make a dramatic story.

Then, when it was all written in synopsis form, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks were invited with Uncle Ben to hear Mrs. Talmage read it, before permitting Uncle Ben to take it to the editor he knew in New York.

Early in the evening, directly after dinner, everyone assembled in the Winter Nest to hear the play.

"First scene: Mother and two children—a boy of four and a little girl of three—in a lovely room where it is seen at a glance that money is not lacking to make everything comfortable and luxurious for the occupants.

"Mother is in house-gown reading magazine, children are building a tower of blocks on the rug at their mother's feet. Knock comes at door. Mother bids maid enter. Messenger boy follows and hands mother a telegram. Children look up at boy in curiosity. Mother tears open the envelope with apprehension on her face. Hurriedly reads the message.

"When the realization of the news comes over the mother she cries out and flings her arms up. Faints away. Maid runs over to help her while children creep near their mother. Messenger boy picks telegram up from floor and reads the news that startled the lady.

" 'James Montrose, killed in explosion of mine. Many others with him. No identification possible—everything in ashes.'

"The messenger gasps. Maid orders him to run down street for doctor. Boy rushes out—finds telegram in his hand. Sees doctor's sign on corner across street. Attempts to run across—struck by automobile—thrown violently down—telegram falls in mud unseen and is soon trampled. Crowd gathers and boy is carried away in ambulance.

"Maid waits for doctor but no one comes. Rests fainting woman's head on little boy's shoulder and goes to telephone. A doctor finally calls but shakes head after taking pulse and listening to heart. Declares it heart failure from shock. Doctor is stranger and does not question maid or cause of shock. Maid looks for telegram but cannot find it. Doctor accepts her statement and enters it in certificate.

"Maid is left alone with children, and not knowing who lawyer or friends are, does not know enough to notify papers or anyone else of the incident. But her sweetheart, who is ex-convict, advises her. He sends an unscrupulous lawyer to act in the case, and this man goes through papers left by man and his wife and agrees with crook and the girl to share all he can steal out of

the estate. But he sternly orders the maid and her beau to keep silence about the entire affair.

"The villain moves into the house and takes up residence there to find out all he can regarding the facts of the Montrose family. Then, one day, the children disappear from the house. The maid asks questions about them and is told that they have been sent to school to be educated and brought up. She doubts it but is threatened with arrest if she hints a word of the matter to anyone. Her sweetheart, who is employed by the rascally lawyer, also threatens to leave her if she doesn't keep a close mouth.

"The children, dressed in common old clothes, have been taken several blocks away from their home and lifted into a cab. The villain drives them quickly downtown where an accomplice is waiting and they are turned over to this evil looking man. The villain gives him minute instructions and goes back uptown. The accomplice jumps in another taxi-cab with children and reaches the Hudson Terminal. Here he takes children to the train and they are soon in Jersey City.

"Then begins their education in crime and poverty.

"They are lodged with a dozen or more other youngsters of about their own age, some appearing stupid with weariness and lack of food or sleep, others experienced in the life and alert to take advantage of the innocent arrivals.

"Before the little boy and girl can comprehend what is happening, they are beaten and robbed of any decent clothing they had worn, the other hardened boys and girls taking whatever they could wear or sell. Filthy rags were thrown at the little ones in exchange for their comparatively decent clothes. Both children are exhausted with weeping and fear, but keep up their whimpered longings for their comfortable home and their dear parents. Finally a brute strides in and demands to know who is crying and disturbing his rest. The other children cower and point at the newcomers. The drunken man shakes them and throws them upon a heap of trash, ordering them to keep still and sleep!

"In the morning their training begins. With half a dozen other little children ranging from four to eight years of age, they are taught how

to whine and beg on the streets, how to pick pockets, how to sneak away from suspicious detectives, how to do the hundred and one tricky things that go to make a thoroughly bad criminal in later years.

"With all this teaching they are cuffed and starved and given no decent bedding or shelter, so that it becomes necessary to do as they are ordered that food and rest may be earned. Too young to know the evil and too tired and heartbroken to care what becomes of them, these little waifs do as they are told, just as a mechanical toy runs about when wound up by a strong hand.

"After a time, the little boy is removed from his sister and taken to another city where he is eased out to a man who keeps boot-blacks. (Now appears the experience of little Jim, the bootblack, showing the scenes he pictured to the Blue Birds.)

"The little sister, almost too young to be of any use whatever, is found to fit in a place with a dreadful organ-grinder. Her fair skin is stained with walnut juice and her hair dyed black. She must trudge about with the man and hold out the

tin cup for pennies. Her tiny form and wistful face is used to draw attention to her cup.

"For this she is given a bed with the monkey, and shares the little beast's fodder. The monkey proves better company than the owner of both of them.

"After several weeks of hardships and longing for his little sister, the boot-black runs away and wanders across the Meadows in order to reach the city where he thinks he shall find his sister.

"He appeals to the police but is taken to the Juvenile Court. He tells his story but no one believes him, for he cannot remember where he lived or what his father's name was. All he can tell is that his little sister Anne and he lived with his mother and father in a big house near the park.

"The judge turns to remark that every child should be taught his name and address as well as his father and mother's names, as soon as they can lisp. Then the boy is turned over to the Gerry Society for a time.

"But little James will not remain in a home while he believes his sister is with such dreadful companions, so he runs away again, and keeps

well hidden this time for fear he will be taken back to the Society and thus kept from finding his sister.

"In the meantime, he makes friends with a newsboy and these two decide to run away from the padrone who works them, and start in business for themselves. The newsboy is nine years old and seems quite grown up to James.

"It is Christmas Eve and the newsboy tells his little friend all about the Tree of Light and the party to be given free in New York City.

"The two boys have just enough change to pay for ferry tickets across the river. The wise little newsboy plans to ride uptown to Twenty-third street and then have only the crosstown blocks to walk to the Garden. As both boys can cross the ferry on half-tickets, they still have a few pennies left.

"That night the boys meet a kind lady who gives them each a ticket to go to the country party at Oakdale. She also gives them each a quarter of a dollar—to them untold riches.

"They hug their wealth closely and sleep in a big packing case that night. A kindly policeman

fails to notice them as they crawl out in the cold dawn and run away from him.

"James tells his friend about his sister, and the newsboy ponders the story he has heard. He decides to help James find his home and family again. But it must be done in a way so that the Court and Gerry Society won't get hold of them again.

"During the next few days these two boys see so much of the under world that James is cowed in spirits and heart, but his friend has become immune to the evils and pays no attention to the sights.

"Then comes the great event when the two boys sneak away to the Railroad Terminal where they are told they could get a free ride to the country for the day's outing.

"Neither of the boys has sufficient clothing to keep warm, but they have heard that some mittens and sweaters would be given those who need them most, so they live in hopes.

"Several boys and girls in the party were recognised by the newsboy as his associates downtown. James sought everywhere for his little

sister, but could not find her among the hundreds of poor children on the train.

"A kind lady went through the train stopping now and then to speak to a child, and the newsboy decided to interest her in James' story.

"She listened intently and gasped at the daring crime, then tells the boys she will report it as once. She brings Uncle Ben to the children and he hears the story, too. The young newspaper man, Mr. Richards, makes notes of the facts, and promises to follow up the story at once. But they all try to make James remember his last name or his father's name.

"At Oakdale, the children are having a fine time when a little boy faints on the hill-side. He is carried to the house and Uncle Ben hears that he was but recently discharged from the hospital where he had been laid up by an accident from an auto truck.

"Uncle Ben talks with him while he is sipping some broth and hears how he was running for a doctor when he was struck. Finally, the story of the telegram comes out and Uncle Ben gasps when he realizes that the children in the messenger boy's story might possibly be the two who

were kidnapped and sold to villains. He says nothing to the boy, however, but sends out to have James brought to the house.

"The little fellow is brought and after a time the messenger boy recognises the resemblance between this boy and the boy he saw at that home. He is told the story of the kidnapping and how James could not remember his last name. The messenger instantly supplies the information and Uncle Ben looks up the name in the directory and finds the house address.

"Mr. Richards and he immediately take a train to New York advising the messenger and the two little boys to remain at Oakdale until they return.

"The police are notified and detective sent out to find the little girl, while a number of officers accompany Uncle Ben and Mr. Richards uptown in a taxicab.

"The house is soon found but everything has been sold and removed from the premises. A street cleaner tells them that it was closed weeks ago, when the folks that lived there had died.

"No information could be had from the cleaner, but one of the detectives asked a postman about

the people who took possession when the owners disappeared. The maid and the man who acted as guardian of the children were described. It was found that he answered the description of one of the city's dangerous criminals.

"As nothing could be learned by waiting about the empty house, the searchers went back to police-headquarters to report. As they were entering the corridor a great scuffle was taking place, and a powerful foreigner tried to escape after felling several of his captors. But he was soon in irons and his little victim, who was the cause of his arrest, was carried to a room, where a matron applied warm water to wash away the clotted blood formed by the blow the organ-grinder had given her.

"To the matron's surprise, the walnut stain soon came off with the warm water, and it was found that the little girl was fair instead of dark-skinned.

"As she regained consciousness, the little girl cried for her brother James, and Uncle Ben heard her wail. He clutched Mr. Richard's arm and said, 'Suppose it should be our little girl?'

"The child was placed in good hands to be

cared for, and when her hair and skin were thoroughly washed it was found that she was a pretty little thing with golden hair and a lovely fair complexion.

"The following day, the three boys were brought to the city and the little girl was brought into the room where they sat wondering what would happen next. The moment James saw his little sister he cried out and she ran to him.

"Then, the messenger recognised Mary too, and the reunion was complete. It still remained for the villains to be found and punished and we were told that they were soon discovered through the brilliant young newspaper man, and the whole story was told in detail in the papers."

When Mrs. Talmage had finished reading the story, the audience sighed and clapped their hands softly to show how much they liked the play.

"Plenty of action and quite a melodrama!" laughed Uncle Ben.

"Do you think it sounds impossible?" asked Aunt Selina.

"Even if it sounds far-fetched it really is true

to life as we have heard from these children. We have tried to show in a connected picture play the episodes of each child's individual experience," declared Mr. Talmage.

"Well, I will take it in to-morrow and if the director thinks it needs modifying he can do it himself. We can O. K. the play before he turns it over to the camera man," said Uncle Ben.

"When will he want us to do the acting?" asked Dot, eagerly.

"Perhaps on Saturday a week—or the following Saturday," replied Uncle Ben.

"Oh, only one day!" complained Don, who had had visions of being able to be absent from school for several weeks.

"One day will take the interior pictures, and perhaps they will all come out to Oakdale when the snow is on the ground to take the country scenes. The city scenes can be staged in the studio," explained Uncle Ben.

"The children will find that acting and staging scenes for the movies is a different thing from sitting in a seat and watching the screen-pictures flashed on," laughed Mrs. Catlin.

"It will prove a novel and very interesting ex-

perience for them," added Mrs. Starr, smiling at Don. He saw her look and wondered if she had an inkling of his secret ambition.

During the time the photo play was being considered by the company Uncle Ben went to see, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks worked hard at the valentine idea for the children, as well as in writing stories and articles for a grand February issue of the magazine.

The design had been done in colors by Mrs. Catlin who was a very good artist, but the medallion pictures of the two American heroes were cut out of a sepia photograph book and pasted so that they seemed to have the flag draped about them.

The frontispiece of this issue was to be a reproduction of the photograph taken as the Little Citizens marched up Main Street through the village.

Some of the interested people of New York sent in short articles and the Welfare Worker submitted another child's story, so that the publishers felt they would have plenty of good material to make a fine February number.

Then came the momentous answer to their

photo play. The editor said he would accept it after making some necessary corrections for the director to use. He appointed the following Saturday as the day to take the snow scenes—that is if the snow lasted until then. He said they would all be at Oakdale at nine o'clock to begin operations.

"Nine o'clock! Goodness, what time do they get up?" cried Don.

"Oh, the movie actors have to keep an appointment sometimes as early as seven o'clock in the morning. If they have an extra hard day's work they keep on acting until eight and nine at night!" explained Uncle Ben.

"What! Why, I heard they only played a few hours a day and got heaps of money for it!" cried amazed Don.

"Don't you believe it, boy! I know something of the work they do through my editorial connection, and I tell you that only the very few ever reach the top rung of the ladder where Chaplin or Mary Pickford are. And they had to work hard and wait years for this opportunity, you know. Why, there are days when movie actors are ready to drop where they stand, and yet they

have to smile and keep on acting until the camera man calls "quit." When they take a film in the country, as they will out here in Oakdale, everyone who is ordered to go with the company has to be on hand for the call at seven. That means they have to get up and dress by five o'clock if they live any distance from the studio."

Don's eyes widened as he listened and he was fast losing his desire to become a second Charley Chaplin for he dearly loved to cuddle down in his warm bed on a frosty morning.

Sure enough, on the nine o'clock train to arrive at Oakdale, came the moving picture people with all of their paraphernalia to take pictures. It caused great excitement in the little village, for such an event as having their most prominent families act in the movies, had never been heard of!

It was not long before the director and his men were walking back and forth at the hill where the children were expected to coast, and one little fellow to faint. It was not necessary to ask for supers, as every child in Oakdale hovered about the scene hoping to be included in the pictures. When it was suggested that they all get

sleds and coast down hill, they were only too delighted to comply.

The outdoor scene was soon finished and then came the scene of carrying the fainting boy to Mossy Glen. As Tuck was the smallest boy he was selected for "James," but he was a poor actor, while Don could act well. So, Tuck's face was turned away from the camera while he was being carried to the house and immediately Don arranged himself on the couch in the library to pretend he was the lad they had just carried in.

No hitch occurred in the acting that day, and the director said he was sure the film would turn out to be a fine one. If it did not, they would all have to do the same thing over again.

The children were so excited over the whole affair that they felt as if everyone must recognise in them the famous screen artists. In fact, so egotistical were they that they sneered at the billboard advertising the famous Geraldine Farrar in the rôle of Carmen.

"Pooh, she can't act a little bit!" scoffed Don.

"I should say not! Why, we can show all of them a few pointers!" bragged Tuck, as the two

boys stood watching the towns-people crowd into the theatre on Main Street.

As so much work had to be attended to to make the forthcoming number of the magazine a successful one, the actors had little time to compare the worth of other actresses or actors to themselves. This, with their school lessons, crowded their time so that Saturday soon came around again when Uncle Ben led them all to the ferry that went to Fort Lee.

Uncle Ben had arranged with the director for the following Saturday to bring his party of Blue Birds and Bobolinks to the studio for the interiors and street scenes of New York.

The children were duly excited to think that they were about to see a real live picture place. As they had no conception of the manner in which pictures were made, they were not a little disappointed and surprised to find their air-castles fall.

In the first place, the building was not as imposing as the Capitol at Washington, and they all thought it would be, for had not each one of them seen the grand houses and furnishings in pictures produced by this company?

The studio was a rough concrete affair with many windows and sky-lights. The dressing rooms were small bare cells where actresses and actors lounged about waiting for a call. The offices were in a low row of buildings without attempt at decoration or effect. Just business, business, business, suggested itself everywhere, and the idea that all of this work was done to make money took the polish from the movies at once.

As Don observed the intricate devices of the motion picture industry, he silently decided to sacrifice his genius and live at home. When he saw the director of a certain picture order the actors about and heard him scold because one of the girls had made an awkward mistake, he was sure that this company was a poor example of the art. The others he read about would be much better, he thought.

The children were intensely interested to find three plays being filmed at the same time. In one corner of the great studio a Mexican scene was being done—the artificial cactus and sand drifts arranged to seem real in the picture. The old mission house only showed a corner of its

plaster, for that would be all that would show in the picture.

In another corner of the studio a play staged at the western mines, was being acted. Here, the director had to scold the heroine over and over again to make her run into the room properly, and call for help the moment she saw the miner trying to steal her little hoard of savings. This amused the children a great deal and they watched the actress run in the same door and give the same cry again and again until she did it exactly right.

During the time the children were watching this act the third play was finished and the director welcomed Uncle Ben. The scenery was changed to fit a scene of the Little Citizens' photo play, and then the children were called to come and take part.

They were shown dressing rooms and given dirty old clothes to wear in the pictures, and after many attempts to pose them and teach them how to look and how to act before the camera, the weary director finally called, "still!"

Every child turned his or her head to see what he meant, and the poor man groaned aloud. He

had forgotten to tell them a "still" meant that not one eyelash must move while a picture of a still group was being taken for illustration purposes.

So, he tried it again. This time it was successful.

Then he began on the film and at the end of a hard tiresome day the Blue Birds and Bobolinks shook hands with the director and followed Uncle Ben to the trolley cars.

"Well, I'd never want to be a movie actor!" declared Ned.

"I should say not! One day's enough for me!" added Don, as if he had never had visions of a million a year salary in the movies.

"Our director was the nicest of them all—did you hear that other one shout at the Mexican who tripped over the cactus and smashed it flat!" laughed Jinks.

"Um! And that stupid actress that just couldn't rush in and shoot the thief! I guess I could have done it right the first time!" bragged Dot.

"Then I don't see why you couldn't have done that easy part of the little sister crying on the

floor when her mother fainted?" wondered Uncle Ben, which criticism effectually silenced Dot.

On arriving at Oakdale, however, the amateur actors and actresses had so much to tell their school-friends that Uncle Ben said he was going home. So he arrived at Mossy Glen an hour before the star performers put in their appearance.

When they did arrive, however, they heard the glad news that some unknown benefactor had sent them a thousand two-cent stamps to use on the valentines that would be forwarded and which might come in without any postage on the envelopes.

"Gracious! That reminds me that we must get to work on that February number now and see that it is completed."

CHAPTER VII

THE FEBRUARY NUMBER

The original idea of sending valentines to the poor children and distributing enough to every hospital and home where little ones would delight over a pretty card sent by some unknown giver, was successful. The men and women who had met the Blue Birds and Bobolinks in New York coöperated eagerly with every plan to help the poor, and consequently there were plenty of valentines and enough postage to supply everyone on the list the children had compiled.

Then, too, the few advance copies of the February magazine were so splendid that the publishers took great pride in showing it to teachers and friends.

As stated before, the cover design was made of two fine medallion pictures of Washington and Lincoln, with the American flag in colors draped over and at each side of the portraits. An

American Eagle, with wide-spread wings, hovered over the top of the photographs and held the edge of the flag in its beak.

On the first page of the magazine, opposite the frontispiece of the Little Citizens marching up Main Street on the day of their winter outing, was the following poem written by the Welfare woman in New York.

ST. VALENTINE

Do any know his loving story, children dear?
If not, I'll tell it you, if only you will hear.
Yes, just a dear, old man, with soft and wavy hair;
With kindly, loving nature, ever free from care.
He always spoke with cheering voice—if some were sad
He always dropped the comfort word—to make them glad.
If some were sick, in need, he heard their weary call;
He brought them food and raiment—love for one and all.
Old Time made hoary then his head, with many a year;
But love had made these be his aides—the children dear!
They carried forth his words of cheer—the little doves:
They left sweet joy at every door—his words of love—
A tiny seed, "From God's dear love no child can fall."
No wonder then the dear old Saint was loved by all.
Oh, don't you see what Truth and Love do, children dear?
They say, "Let us be your good Valentine this year!"

Following this verse came the story written by Mrs. Catlin for Valentine's Day. It was called "Philip's Love Story."

"Philip and Florrie had been good friends and playmates for all the time they had lived next door to each other—which was more than three years.

"Every February Philip sent Florrie a pretty lace-edged valentine with dainty pictures and sweet verses on it. Then, just before the first week of February of this year, a new family moved into the vacant house which stood on the other side of Philip's house. The new family had one child, a little girl of Florrie's own age. But this little girl, Amy, had so many fine clothes and seemed to have everything a child's heart could wish for, that Florrie thought Amy must be the happiest little girl in the whole world.

"But she was not. To tell the truth, Amy was a very discontented and fretful child. She had always lived in a large city and had many companions of her own age, and these she ordered about and ruled as if she were a little queen. Some of the girls would grow angry at her im-

perious manner, but the little boys generally did exactly as Amy ordered them.

"Her mother was sick and the doctors sent the family to live in the country, so Amy had to leave her subjects behind—much to the delight of the girls and to the regret of the boys.

"When Amy found only two children of her age in the neighborhood, she thought she would be very lonesome, but she soon found that Philip was very nice and Florrie so much pleasanter than the city girls, that she forgot her regret for her city playmates.

"But soon Amy began to rule in much the same way as she had done in the city. She ordered Philip to do things for her, and to assume all responsibilities in any plan she thought of. She expected Florrie to fetch and carry just as if she, Amy, were a royal princess. And this Florrie refused to do. Hence the trouble.

"Before a week had passed, Philip was completely under Amy's thumb and Florrie felt ashamed to see him so blind to the old friendship, for he seemed to forget that little Florrie had ever lived or played with him.

"Then came the Fourteenth of February.

"Florrie wondered if she would get a valentine as usual. The day came but no postman delivered a lace-edged envelope at Florrie's door, although dozens were carried to Amy's house at the first delivery, and during the day other valentines arrived from the city from many of her faithful subjects there.

At noon, Florrie looked carefully on the hall-table, the letter-tray in the library, and then asked the maid if any letter had come for her that day. But the girl shook her head.

"Florrie was so hurt over the affair that she felt she must cry, but she did not wish to have anyone see her tears, so she hurried up to the attic and threw herself down upon an old sofa. Here she could cry and sob just as hard as she liked and no one would hear.

"After a time, however, she heard Philip whistling in his back-yard where he was building a rabbit-hutch. So Florrie crept over to the diamond-paned dormer window to see if Amy were with him. She knew that she would have been helping him with the house if Amy had not moved into the neighborhood! But now—

Philip most likely forgot she ever lived, and certainly she felt very much alone!

"Philip was working quite close to the board fence so that Florrie had to lean over to one side of the window to see him at all. A very old-fashioned secrétaire stood by the side of the window, leaning against the wall, as its front claw-foot had been broken off and it wobbled uncertainly on its three shaky legs.

"Florrie leaned over too far and lost her balance. She threw out both hands wildly to clutch hold of anything in reach, and thus caught hold of the corner of the secrétaire, making it sway dangerously towards her.

"But it was too heavy to fall over, and soon was steadied again against the wall. The sudden push, however, and the toppling forwards, had loosened a tiny secret drawer that was fitted in the front of the top drawer, and looked for all the world just like a bit of fancy carving. This secret drawer was not more than an inch deep but it extended all across the front of the article of furniture.

"Of course, the moment Florrie saw the queer flat little drawer she pulled it out as far as she

could and stood looking in amazement at the stained and yellow papers neatly arranged in flat packages. She took up a few of them gently for they appeared to be very old, and then she found at the bottom of one ribbon-tied package, a lovely old valentine.

"Florrie eagerly took it to the window and opened the crumbling ribbon. The valentine was hand-made on parchment paper and had the picture of two doves meeting, with a tiny heart held between them. The picture seemed to be done in pale colored ink, which Florrie learned later was 'illuminated.'

"Underneath the picture was a line which read: 'From Philip to Florence, with all his love.' And then followed a verse composed by the writer. It was very sweet and tender, and little Florrie smiled as she thought of the strange valentine she received from Philip after all!

"She ran downstairs to her mother with the valentine, and Florrie was not disappointed at her expectation of mother's surprise! In fact, both of them hurried up to the attic again to carefully remove the papers and take them down to the library.

" 'How do you suppose they ever got into that old drawer?' asked Florrie, eagerly.

" 'Why, you see this old secrétaire does not belong to our family. When Philip's family first moved next door, they had no place for the high piece of furniture and it would not go up the narrow attic stairs of their house. Your father needed just such a desk to hold all of his many papers that year, so he offered to buy it from Philip's father.

" 'At first they didn't want to take any money for it, for they said it wasn't worth anything, but father said he would feel as if he had a better right to use it if he bought it, so it was settled that way. Last year, when father purchased the new desk he had this antique piece sent to the attic.'

"As soon as the papers were dusted off and carefully placed in a box, Florrie and her mother hurried over to Philip's house with them—but Florrie kept the valentine in her own room.

"There was great excitement over the discovery of the papers for they proved to be the missing papers of a great grandfather's which were absolutely necessary to prove Philip's claim to

a valuable New England Farm—now the suburbs of a city.

"Everything necessary to identify the heir and all of the papers to establish his rights were found among the old yellow papers—but one little link was missing!

" 'Our great grandfather always kept the valentine he sent to his sweetheart, as it was a token of betrothal. This letter mentions it, but I cannot find it with the others,' said Philip's mother.

"Then Florrie flushed uncomfortably and confessed: 'I wanted a valentine to-day, and I thought no one would miss that one so I kept it.'

"Then Philip looked surprised. 'Didn't you get the one I sent you?' cried he.

" 'Did you send me one?' eagerly asked Florrie.

" 'Of course! Did you think I would forget you?' laughed Philip.

" 'Well, I never got it. I must ask the postman about it when he comes,' replied Florrie.

" 'Oh, I didn't send it by post—Amy was going past your place she said, and she offered to drop it in your letter-box by the door. I was in a

hurry to go to the store for mother and I had to go the opposite way,' explained Philip.

"Florrie wondered if Amy would do anything so mean as to keep a valentine which did not belong to her, and Philip said nothing but seemed to think a great deal.

"While Florrie ran home to get the old-fashioned valentine Philip ran over to Amy's house.

"Amy seemed very glad to see him but he said hurriedly, 'Where is the valentine I asked you to leave at Florrie's door?'

" 'Oh, goodness me! I forgot all about it! I have it in my coat pocket! How could I have been so careless!'

"As Amy went out to get her coat, Philip followed but the valentine was not in her pocket. Instead, Philip saw a crumpled envelope and some pieces of lace and colored paper on the hearth of the fire-place and he stooped over to make sure what it was. Then he gave Amy one look and ran away.

"When Florrie returned with the aged valentine, they all read and laughed happily over the quaint missive, and then Philip took it and whispered in his mother's ear. She smiled and

nodded her head, so the boy took the valentine over to Florrie and said, 'I found out the ready-made valentine from the store was destroyed so I am giving this dear old valentine to you for your very own from your friend Philip.'

"Florrie was so pleased with the old valentine that she forgot all about the other one.

"Now, I suppose every Blue Bird and Bobolink will wonder what happened to Philip and Florrie after this. So, I must add: Philip came into his property soon after the discovery of the papers and when the two children were grown up they married and lived happily ever after. They will be very glad to donate money or valentines to the Little Citizens if you will write and ask them to help. I will give you the address if you wish it."

This story was considered one of the best the publishers had ever heard or read, as it was exactly like a real fairy-tale and love-story and adventure combined in one.

After this story came a poem written by Lavinia Starr. Considering that Lavinia was not

twelve years of age, the poem was pronounced very good indeed. It was named,

WASHINGTON AND HIS HATCHET

There was a boy named Washington,
And one day when his "chores" were done
He got permission to go and play
With his hatchet not far away.

Going through the yard he spied,
Away off to the right-hand side,
A cherry tree—his father's pride—
And longingly the tree he eyed.

There it stood; at once he thought,
"My hatchet can bring that to naught!"
So he began to chop straightway,
Never thinking what Pa would say.

His father, in the afternoon,
Strode angrily into the room.
"Who cut my tree?" cried Washington;
"I did!" said the hopeful son.

"'Tis better to chop down twenty trees,"
Said Pa to the son at his knees;
"For that would not be half so bad
As to tell a lie to your dear old dad."

The young publishers laughed over Vene's poem, but they liked it, for it was funny and would make many a Little Citizen laugh, too.

After the poem came a story written by a friend of Uncle Ben's. She had heard of the work the children were doing and wrote to tell Uncle Ben that she would be glad to contribute a story each month if the young publishers wished her to do so. A letter was written thanking Mrs. MacCloud for her kind offer and the first story she sent was called "The Squirrel's Valentines."

"The little gray squirrel scurried across the snow and up to the nest where lived his best friend.

" 'Nipper, do you know what Valentine's Day is?' he asked as he was welcomed into the warm little house which Mrs. Nipper took pains to keep in perfect order. Mr. Nipper looked mystified.

" 'Never heard of such a thing,' said he.

" 'Well, I'll tell you,' and Frisky settled himself down to impart his newly acquired information.

" 'I heard a little boy and girl in the greenhouse on the hill-side talking about it, and they said that it was the day of all the year to write down some love thoughts and send them to your friends without telling who sent them. Now,

we squirrels have never known of such a day, and if we are behind the times, we want to catch up mighty quick! I think we ought to celebrate Valentine's Day.'

'When is it?' asked Nipper.

" 'I heard Donald tell his sister it would be the 14th of February—that is only two days from now, so we must get busy right away,' replied Frisky.

"Frisky and Nipper tried to think of some good plan to initiate squirreldom into the plan of sending valentines, but nothing really worth while seemed to present itself to their thoughts.

"While they were debating the weighty question, Mrs. Nipper appeared on the threshhold, and after greeting Mr. Frisky cordially, asked him what seemed to trouble them.

"Mr. Nipper then told her what they had been talking about and concluded with, 'I'm sure, my dear, now that you are here to suggest something, we can decide immediately on the way to celebrate this new holiday.'

"Mrs. Nipper looked pleased, but reminded her husband that he must not depend upon her for good thoughts as much as he should look to the

One who gave all good thoughts that were to be expressed.

"As Mrs. Nipper spoke, Mr. Frisky remembered something. 'I'll tell you the plan that comes to me right now!'

"Mr. and Mrs. Nipper seemed very curious to hear it.

" 'Instead of writing notes suppose we give love-gifts and send love-thoughts to our friends. We have more nuts stored away than we can possibly use before summer comes again, and the Chipmunks have such a large family that they almost always run out of food before winter is over. It would be very nice to leave a large pile of nuts near their door on Valentine's Day, and then hide and see what they say!'

" 'Just the thing!' exclaimed Mr. Nipper and his wife.

" 'And the Beaver family,' added Mrs. Nipper. 'You know they are always so busy that they do not have time to bother about dessert. All they can get to eat in the winter is tree-bark and roots. I think they would just love to have a Valentine Day of nuts given them. But we must not let them know who did it!'

"By this time Mr. Nipper thought of many other friends who would appreciate a little feast of nuts, so the three friends were very happy planning the surprises.

"On Valentine's Day what pleasure they had —and gave, too. Piling the nuts where their friends would find them readily, they scampered away to hide in the topmost boughs of a nearby tree to watch the delight of the little wild-wood people who found the love-gifts waiting for them.

"Valentine's Day was a happy day for many of the furry families of the woods, not only that year, but many following years, for soon, it became the custom for all of the friends to exchange love-gifts with each other, and many of the poor Little Citizens of the forest were helped to live through the cold winter without fear of famine."

The Blue Birds liked this little story immensely, and Ned declared that they were improving every month in their grade of stories for the magazine.

Uncle Ben had compiled a page of puzzles and charades and Mrs. Catlin had written a page of ideas for entertaining—all suitable for Valen-

tine's Day, or George Washington parties. The Cherry Tree party, described in detail was tried at the Starr's house the week following the coming-out of the magazine and it was great fun.

Aunt Selina started to describe Happy Hills in this issue, and a small notice at the close of her article told all the poor children who would read or hear of the magazine that a great party, lasting from June to September, would take place at Happy Hills, in the Valley of Delight. That *everyone* was invited to come and stay as long as they wished. Poor, sick, dumb or blind—all would be welcome and find rest in the woods.

It was Aunt Selina's purpose to introduce her camp plans in plenty of time to insure success. So she determined to give full particulars of her plans and start early to invite all she could gather together.

A friend of Uncle Ben's had sent in a humorous story about George Washington which greatly amused the readers for they knew it was all make-believe on the part of the story-teller.

Then Uncle Ben had found a splendid speech delivered by Lincoln at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, on the occasion of the dedication of a

part of the famous battle-field as a soldier's cemetery.

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

"But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow, this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather

for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The Secretary of the National Audubon Society sent in a fine bird story, and the Big Chief of the Woodcraft League wrote an Indian legend for the publishers. So, taking all things into consideration, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks declared the February issue a wonderful success.

On the last page of the magazine appeared this splendid selection from a lecture written by Abraham Lincoln in 1850.

"The leading rule for the man of every calling is *diligence*. Leave nothing for to-morrow which can be done to-day. Never let your correspondence fall behind. Whatever piece of

business you have in hand, before stopping, do all the labor pertaining to it which can be done."

"Well, that rule is big enough to be made into a motto and hung in our office at the barn!" exclaimed Ned, after reading it over carefully.

"Yes, but maybe Lincoln didn't publish a magazine and go to school at the same time. Maybe he wouldn't have been so strict about writing up correspondence, if he had had to do what I have!" grumbled Jinks.

Everybody laughed for it was one of Jinks' failings that he postponed letter writing of any sort, and that was why he had been elected to the position of secretary of the company.

CHAPTER VIII

FLUTEY'S RETURN TO HAPPY HILLS

"Dear, dear! I never saw time fly as it has since I came to Mossy Glen with Ruth. I came to visit a few days and here it is almost four months! If it were not for the necessity of preparing Happy Hills for the Little Citizens coming this summer I could find enough to do here to keep me busy for a whole year, I daresay!" laughed Aunt Selina one morning at breakfast.

"Why, Flutey! You have loads of time to get ready for the poor children this summer! What shall we do for our March magazine without you to help us?" cried Ruth, aghast at the idea of losing Aunt Selina's aid.

"Oh, I am not such a help, but I must admit that the entire publishing company has been a most important help to me! I have felt so well and strong since taking an interest in this work that I might be persuaded to say that I have dropped twenty years from my age!"

"Well, Flutey, you look it, too!" declared Mrs. Talmage.

"Yes, I often feel tempted to introduce Flutey as my sister instead of my great-aunt, these days!" added Uncle Ben.

Miss Selina smiled indulgently at her niece and nephew but shook her head disparagingly.

Mr. Talmage entered the dining-room at that moment with an open telegram in his hand and a frown upon his face. Everyone looked at him questioningly as he took a seat at the table.

"Well, my vacation is ended! I have to go back to Brazil as soon as I can arrange affairs up here. It seems this strike fever has penetrated as far as the wild forests of Brazil and our half-breeds are determined to go out unless their work-day is shortened two hours. Of course they have been incited to do this by some ignorant fellow who doesn't know the conditions prevailing in Brazilian forests. For the amount of timber cut we already pay exorbitant wages!" exclaimed Mr. Talmage.

"Oh, father! We thought you were going to be home all summer!" cried Ruth, on the verge of tears.

"So did I, Fluff—but I may be back again before the summer is well on, you know. I have to take that trip to the west when Mr. Starr goes. This labor trouble may prove to be but a 'tempest in a teapot,' explained Mr. Talmage.

"Goodness me, what will the Blue Birds and Bobolinks do without two of their strong allies!" wondered Mrs. Talmage.

"We have one pleasure left us after father and Flutey are gone—we can surprise them with examples of our work in the magazine and farm plan!" declared Ned.

"When will you be ready to leave, Al?" asked Uncle Ben of his brother.

"I will run into the city with you and find out when the next steamer sails for South America, and then arrange my affairs at the New York office for a short absence," replied Mr. Talmage.

That evening was not a very merry one, for everyone felt the sense of the impending departure of two of their best friends and no one wished to plan or talk of future work for the Little Citizens.

Then came a lovely warm morning in March when Ike brought the car to the front door and

everyone crowded out on the veranda steps to wish Flutey a safe journey back to Happy Hills. Uncle Ben was going with her on the ride and would return with Ike in the evening.

The house seemed empty after Aunt Selina had gone, and the two Talmage children had to run to the publishing company's offices in the barn to keep from crying. Even Mother Wings felt forlorn and accepted an invitation from Mrs. Starr to go with her to take luncheon at Mrs. Catlin's.

Then came the day when Mr. Talmage sailed and another void in the family had to be temporarily filled by friends remaining at Oakdale.

One day, while the Blue Birds were in their Winter Nest talking over the stories spread before them for the next issue of the magazine, Fluff said, "We haven't thought of a single thing to do for our Little Citizens since Valentine's Day!"

"There isn't anything to do!" replied Betty.

"We did so much in February, with valentines and Lincoln and Washington, that it seems we have used up all extra ideas until spring comes with a nice green crop!" exclaimed Dot Starr,

at which every one laughed merrily, for Dot always said the funniest things!

"April Fools' day comes pretty soon!" suggested Frances.

"Oh, I wouldn't want our Little Citizens to celebrate that day!" cried Ruth.

"Well, what's the matter with Easter, then?" asked Edith.

"Why, sure enough! We must have an Easter Number like every other big magazine, and then we can try to think of some fine way to help the children celebrate!" cried Ruth, clapping her hands.

"I wonder if the Bobolinks remembered it would be the Easter Number of the magazine? Hadn't we better run to the barn and see if any of them are there?" asked Dot.

"Say, Dot, how many times must the boys remind you not to call their publishing offices a barn! Ned says it isn't a barn any more!" laughed Ruth.

"'Tis so! Just because they have a lot of type and a printing press in it doesn't make it a regular office building! Why, Ike stored some extra hay up there this winter, so what would

you call that except a hay-loft! And who ever heard of hayseeds being kept in a printing office!" retorted Dot.

Mrs. Talmage opened the door in time to hear Dot's last remark and she laughed heartily as she replied, "Well, Uncle Ben has called several of his workmen 'hayseeds' so it is doubtful whether hayseeds are confined to the country publishing offices!"

When Mother Wings had been told about the Easter idea she endorsed it and said she would look over some of their short stories while they ran to the office to find the Bobolinks.

Here the Blue Birds found the young publishers busily at work cutting and pasting the duplicate galley proofs of the stories and articles that were spread out on the table of the Winter Nest.

The moment the girls ran in with faces which told there was some new plan of interest being evolved, Ned dropped his paste-brush and motioned to the other boys to suspend work.

"Well, what now? Something's set you all agog!" said he to the Blue Birds.

"I should think so! What are you going to

call this next issue of the magazine?" cried Dot.

"Why, the same as usual! Didn't we decide on the name long ago? What's the trouble now? You just leave this publishing business to us and 'tend to your story and editorial end of it!" said Mete, scornfully, for Dot was almost four years his junior.

"Ha, ha! Think you are smart, don't you!" retorted Dot, shrugging her shoulders in glee for she knew they would all feel humbled when they heard what the girls had thought of.

"I'll tell you, boys!" hurriedly said Ruth, to prevent any ill-feeling. "You see Easter will come before our next number is due, and we ought to name this our Easter Number!"

"Why! That's so!" murmured Don, looking at his associates with chagrin.

"Humph! What about all this stuff we have ready to dummy up into a magazine?" wondered Ned, turning over the yellow sheets of galley proofs.

"We can keep some of them standing for the next issue and pick out the ones that will fit in for Easter!" explained Ruth.

"Yes, Uncle Ben said that we could always

hold over any article we needed or wished postponed by writing on the galley sheets, 'Stand for next month.' But we can't afford to lose any time writing to our friends to send in suitable stories for Easter, nor can we ask Uncle Ben to write all of them. What can we do about it?" worried Ned, looking at the other boys.

"You just leave it to us and we will soon have all the suitable Easter things you need," offered Dot.

"And we also want some sort of an Easter plan set going for our Little Citizens. If we Blue Birds promise to get the articles for you in a day's time, you boys ought to get together and think of some scheme to celebrate Easter for those children," declared Norma.

"I say, that's fair! You get the things to set up in type and we will plan out some new amusement for Little Citizens," cried Jinks.

"All right! Here we go! We will report to you at five to-night—here at the barn!" shouted Dot, turning to run away.

"Heigh, there, Dot! meet us all here at our office!" corrected Don.

It was Saturday morning and there was a

whole bright happy day before the Blue Birds in which to gather some new Easter material for their precious little magazine. Back they flew to their Winter Nest to report to Mother Wings. For at least five minutes thereafter, all were busy talking together and suggesting various plans. At the end of that period Ruth ran to the telephone that connected with the garage, and asked Ike to bring the big car around as soon as possible.

"Mrs. Catlin's first, Ike!" ordered Mrs. Talmage as the Blue Birds jumped into the automobile, followed by Mother Wings.

Arrived at the house on the hill, the children trooped up the steps of the piazza but Mrs. Catlin heard them before they rang the door-bell. She flung open the door and welcomed them.

"Isn't it queer that you Blue Birds should appear just as I was telling a friend of mine about your work for Little Citizens?" cried Mrs. Catlin, while motioning the children towards the large living-room.

As she followed with Mrs. Talmage, she called, "Basil, here come the Blue Birds we were just speaking of."

Then the children were introduced to Mrs. Catlin's cousin who was connected with a large library in the city. Of course, the subject of an Easter number was immediately taken up and discussed, while the cousin sat and smiled at the enthusiasm manifested by the Blue Birds.

It appeared that the little publishers needed a few stories or articles suitable for a spring number, so Mrs. Catlin listened quietly until they had concluded their demands.

"Basil, you are such a splendid scholar, why can't you go into the library and sit down quietly and think up some story or verse for this Easter magazine?" Mrs. Catlin asked her cousin.

"Oh, yes, yes, please do! That will help a lot!" declared Dot, eagerly.

So Mrs. Catlin's cousin Basil laughed and left the room to hastily write for the magazine.

The Blue Birds discussed many different ways of securing what they needed before five o'clock and so it was not to be wondered at that Basil finished his poem and returned before they realized how long a time had elapsed.

The paper was given to Mrs. Catlin who glanced over it hastily and smiled. "I'll read it

aloud to you, Blue Birds, but it strikes me as being very partial to the Bobolinks!"

The children clustered nearer the arm-chair where Mrs. Catlin sat and listened attentively while she read.

BOB O. LINK*

Oh, Bob O. Link was the nicest boy!
Of his mother's heart he was the joy—
And why, do you children think?
He was up each day at the dawn of light,
He sang at his play from morn till night—
Gay little Bob O. Link.

For any work he was far too small,
But you know that working isn't all;
He added many a link
To the golden chain of helpfulness,
Which made his weary mother bless
Kind little Bob O. Link.

When in the morning she combed his hair
(It was very curly, and soft and fair)
If she found a little kink,
He did not howl like a boy I know,
He only laughed and said, "Oh-h-h!"—
Brave little Bob O. Link.

His mother knew what he said was true;
And when she gave him a thing to do
He did it, quick as a wink;

* Contributed by Basil E. Ebers.

Some boys, you know, will wait and wait,
Until to do it, it is too late—
But not good Bob O. Link.

And whenever there came a rainy day,
And in the house he was forced to stay,
His face seemed a little chink
Where the sun shone through—he did not pout,
But was happy indoors, as well as out—
Wise little Bob O. Link.

And when it was time to go to bed,
And in his dear little, round little head
His eyes began to blink,
And his mother said, "Come, Bobby dear,
I think the Dream-Bird is flying near"—
"Good-night," said Bob O. Link.

And would give his father a loving kiss;
Now if you will be as good as this
(You boy, with the cheeks so pink
And the eyes so bright, who reads this song),
Why, you'll be helping the cause along,
And you'll be a BOBOLINK.

As Mrs. Catlin finished reading the poem the Blue Birds declared it was perfectly lovely and ought to please the boys a great deal, for nothing had as yet been especially written for the Bobolinks, but plenty had been said about the Blue Birds.

"Well, Basil, we are all greatly indebted to your versatile brain for this poem, but I still have a favor to ask," said Mrs. Catlin, laughingly.

"Well, cousin, seeing the cause so worthy, I shall be glad to grant it before I hear what it is," laughed Cousin Basil.

"It is only this! Can't you retire once more to that inspiration room and write up a jolly little jingle for Easter?"

"Of course—that is soon granted," replied Basil.

And in the course of another five minutes, the Blue Birds were presented with a fine little jingle called "The Bunnies' Easter Eggs."

"The Bunnies tried on Easter Day to paint some eggs in bright array;
But one poor Bunny broke a shell—another spilt the paint as well.
At last, however, all are done and ready for the morrow's fun.
And all is well for Easter Day when they'll hide these pretty eggs away."

"Good! I think we have done well for half an hour's visit," declared Mrs. Talmage, preparing to go.

"And be sure to bring that story of Easter to our Winter Nest before four o'clock!" reminded Ruth, as she said good-morning to Mrs. Catlin.

"It will surely be there on time!" laughed the lady.

Soon after the Blue Birds had gone, Mrs. Catlin turned to her cousin and said, "Well, Basil, you will have to amuse yourself for some time until I write this little story which I promised the Blue Birds to have ready upon their return."

"All right, Cousin, and while you are busy I will telephone a friend in the city with whom I had an engagement for dinner to-night. I have an idea he can add a most interesting article. While he speaks over the 'phone I can take it down in short-hand at this end of the wire," said Cousin Basil.

"Oh, fine, fine! Do try and get him at once," eagerly replied Mrs. Catlin.

While her cousin was talking with his friend over the telephone extension in the library, Mrs. Catlin sat in the living room and wrote her little story.

AN EASTER ALLEGORY

One beautiful Easter morning a little girl was born in a grand house which stood on a very aristocratic avenue of the great city. Only people of great wealth could live in homes in that neighborhood, for the property and rents were very expensive.

Before night of that same Easter Day the young mother passed away and left the babe in the care of others.

The child thrived and grew and the father watched anxiously as each year passed until his little girl reached the age of seven. During these years the child had been given everything one can wish for. Toys of every description were scattered about the house while the little girl was awake, and flowers from the florists wafted their fragrance from every room—for little Marian was very fond of flowers. This seventh birthday, therefore, was celebrated with great masses of lovely flowers wherever a jar could be placed to hold them.

Papa came home that noon to take his little daughter for an outing. Then, as she ran down

to meet him in the front hall, he caught her up and said, "What does my little girl want most of all for a birthday gift to-day?"

"Ah, papa, if I could only have a little girl to play with! Someone of my very own—not Grace next door, or Helen who lives in the big hotel, for they have their own mammas and papas!"

Papa sighed and said, "Well, Marian, such a gift is not easy to provide, especially someone suited to the company of my precious little girl. But we will take a drive into the country where the early blossoms are clustering on the fruit trees, and where the young grass and daring dandelions are singing all over the land!"

So the two were soon in the open automobile speeding along a fine roadway that led to the beautiful country. But the sweet spring air and the beautiful country-scenes could not quite make Marian forget her real birthday wish.

They were swiftly passing by a stretch of woodland, no house having been seen for many a mile, when suddènly Marian caught her father's sleeve and pointed to some huddled children on a bank of moss under a great tree.

Her father stopped the car and called out to a little girl who was about Marian's age.

"What is wrong, little girl?"

The child turned quickly and showed traces of tears. At the sight, Marian jumped out of the automobile and ran over to the bank. Here she exclaimed at what she found beside the little girl.

A little boy, thin and ill-looking, was stretched out unconsciously upon the moss. His face and hands were covered with dirt and scratches and blood oozed from a wound in his head. The coat was torn and dragged from his body while his little legs seemed to be laying helplessly upon the bank.

"What has happened, little one?" asked Marian's father, gently, seeing at a glance that an accident had occurred to the boy.

"A big car rushed down the road and ran over Tommy. He is all I've got in the world and now I don't know whether he can walk on with me to a farm-house where I hope to find work."

"Did the people in the car know they had hurt Tommy?" cried Marian, shocked.

"I don't know. There was a crowd of men and women laughing and singing, and they never

stopped a minute after I screamed and cried. Tommy was run over and I dragged him up here out of the roadway." And the little girl sobbed and swayed back and forth.

Marian's father stooped over and found the child alive but when he tried the limbs he soon found they were fractured and helpless. He turned to the little sister.

"What is your name, my little maid?"

"Janet Marshall, sir. My mother and father died some years ago, and Tommy and I have had to live anywhere since that bad man took our money away from us."

Marian's father was a lawyer and he at once felt that here was a rare case for law as well as a playmate for Marian.

"Marian, you may bring your little birthday gift to the automobile while I carry Tommy," advised the father gathering the injured little body in his arms.

Marian quickly took Janet's hand and they ran down the bank after the father who laid the little boy carefully on the wide, soft seat in the back, and helped the two little girls in to sit before Tommy so that he would not fall off.

The car soon reached the city where Tommy was taken to the hospital and given over to the surgeons with orders to take every care of the little fellow as he was a friend of Marian's. The father said he would pay all expenses for the best surgeon to be had on the case.

Janet was then told that Tommy would be cared for and would soon come home to live with her, and Marian had the joy of taking the little girl home. Once there, the father heard the story of how the two orphans were robbed of their inheritance and driven forth on the streets.

When Janet told how she had wanted to see the green fields and sweet flowers once more, and how Tommy and she had walked all the way from the city that day, Marian almost cried. Then Janet said that a farmer told them of a place where the children might find work for the summer months on a farm a short distance down the road, and Tommy and she had hurried gladly away to find the house when the automobile ran over the little fellow.

When Marian heard that Janet had no friends or family other than Tommy, she embraced her saying, "God sent you to me for my birthday gift."

Just as Mrs. Catlin finished writing her story, Basil came in laughing as he held out a paper filled with short-hand symbols.

"Well, Cousin, did you finish your story?" asked Basil.

"Yes—how about you?" replied Mrs. Catlin.

"Well, I have it all here, but it will not do for an Easter story—it is more appropriate for the Fourth of July. My friend is the Chief of the Bureau of Combustibles and he said that in the spring when so many children play about rubbish heaps left from house-cleaning, and make bon-fires, he thought a good lesson would be just the thing. So he gave me a story of a true case that came under his notice recently. But I won't send it in for Easter. It will be more emphatic later on when Decoration Day, or the Fourth approaches."

Mrs. Catlin could not read stenography so she was unable to say whether or not the story was suitable for the Easter Number.

"Well, you gave us some good reading matter anyway, so I will excuse you from more duty until next month," laughed she.

CHAPTER IX

PREPARING HAPPY HILLS

After leaving Mrs. Catlin's house, the Blue Birds sped along towards Dot Starr's home. Mrs. Starr was at home and welcomed her visitors while her anxious little daughter, Dot, tried to explain all about the idea for an Easter Magazine.

"And the whole story in a nutshell is, 'What can I contribute for the publishers?' I suppose," laughed Mrs. Starr.

"Exactly!" laughed Mrs. Talmage in reply.

Then Mrs. Starr was shown the two poems written by Mrs. Catlin's cousin, and how they were promised a fine Easter story by Mrs. Catlin.

"Well, I have been compiling some interesting data about the customs in different countries on the occasion of the various holidays, or feast-days, as they were called in olden times, and I

can give you the article about April, without any delay. I have it in my portfolio," said Mrs. Starr.

"Do get it and let us hear it read," said Mrs. Talmage.

So Mrs. Starr left the room and in a short time she returned with the manuscript. She turned to the desired page and read:

"April is the month of sunny smiles and showery tears, of clear and cloudy skies, of blooms and blossoms and all things that promise new life to the dwellers on earth.

"April is the only month of all the year whose name is expressive of its nature. The name is derived from the Latin word 'aperire,' to open, in allusion to the opening of the buds of spring; all other months are named after heathen deities, or Roman emperors, but the Romans dedicated April to Venus the goddess of beauty.

"It is a time when all nature seems singing and dancing for joy; the children skip rope and race after hoops, while the boys jump 'hop-Scotch' and play ball; birds fly hither and thither in their busy nest-making, and butterflies chase

each other in the sunshine, while every creature seems to awaken to the sweetness of life.

"The first day of April, of all days in the year, is known as 'All Fools'' Day, and all sorts of practical jokes are allowed on that day.

"April has its religious festivities, too, particularly observed in England, when on the Saturday before Palm Sunday the children go out 'A-palming'—that is, they go to the woods for slips of willow or rushes which takes the place of the palm in sections where a palm is never seen.

"Then there is Maundy Thursday, when the poor folk receive gifts from friends.

"But the best known, besides Easter Sunday, is Good Friday. This is universally remembered by children in England because of the hot-cross buns. In Germany, because of their dinner of noodles and stewed plums, and the especial coffee cake baked for this day only. In America, the children are also acquiring the custom of calling for hot-cross buns.

"Then, before we finish the April talk, we must remember that the 23rd day of April is called St. George Day, for St. George is the patron saint

of England, and we have all seen pictures of him on his beautiful prancing steed.

"Easter in English comes from the Anglo-Saxon word 'Eostre' which mean goddess of light, or spring. This festival was always celebrated in April, but our present Easter day comes according to the days of the church calendar—sometimes in March and then again in April, as the case may be. It is the day that everyone celebrates as the resurrection day and the old heathen celebration of the goddess of light is quite forgotten in these days."

Mrs. Starr finished reading the article and her audience pronounced it most appropriate. Then Mrs. Talmage added, "Why don't you give the children one of those articles every month? I think they are very interesting and I'm sure the publishers will be glad to have them."

"Well, I selected them with that plan in view, but after I had read the magazine I concluded they were not interesting enough for children, so I put them in the desk again," replied Mrs. Starr.

"Well, you just get them out again and give them to me to take over to Ned!" declared Dot.

"If Dot will permit me to add another idea to the one just accepted by her, I will say that I also have an article written about the origin of 'All Fools'' Day, which I consider very interesting," said Mrs. Starr.

Dot felt rebuked by her wise mother and sat still without saying another word during the time the article was read.

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF "ALL FOOLS'" DAY

"The custom of playing a joke upon one's neighbor on the first day of April is of very ancient times. In fact, it dates so far back in the past that we are unable to tell just when or with what nation it had its birth.

"Among the Hindus there is a feast which is still observed, called the 'huli' which, continuing several days, terminates on the thirty-first day of March. One of the distinctive features of this feast is that everyone endeavors to send his neighbor upon some errand to some imaginary person, or at least to some person whom he knows will not be at home. When the joke is discovered they all have a good laugh.

"The observance of April Fools' Day is a very popular one in France, and we find traces of it there at a much earlier period than we do in England. It is related that Francis, Duke of Lorraine, and his wife, having been confined at Nantes as prisoners, successfully made their escape on April first. It was in this manner:

"Knowing that the guards would be upon the lookout lest some joke be played upon them, the Duke and his wife disguised themselves as peasants, the Duke carrying a hod upon his shoulder and his wife bearing a basket of rubbish upon her back.

"Thus disguised, they passed through the gates of the city at an early hour of the day. There was one woman, however, who guessed the secret of the escape. She was an enemy of the Duke's, so she resolved that they should not thus escape.

"She hastened to one of the guards and told him that the prisoners had escaped, but he regarded her information as an attempt to play a joke upon him and he laughed heartily, crying, 'April Fool!' to let the woman know that he was not to be caught napping.

"Hearing the soldier call this out, the rest of the guard, led by their sergeant, shouted 'April Fool!' until the woman was forced to retire without having accomplished her purpose.

"When it was found that she had told the truth, it was too late, for the Duke and his wife had made good their escape.

"In France, the person who is fooled is called 'poisson d'Avril.'

"In England the custom of fooling others is practised very much as it is in the United States. The urchins on the streets make sport of tricking some passerby by calling attention to his coat-tails, or by pinning paper on his back. Some use white crayon and write the name 'April Fool' across an inviting black back of cloth.

"While speaking of April Fools we must also mention the story of the Wise Fools of Gotham.

"Gotham is a village in Nottinghamshire, England. One time, when King John and his retinue were marching toward the village, the people learned that he intended to pass through Gotham meadow. Now the ground over which a king passed in those days became a public highway ever after, and should this King be suffered to

pass through their meadow the villagers knew that they would lose this valuable ground.

"Hence, they resolved to save the meadow and a plan was devised. But the King was furious when he learned what had been done and he sent messengers at once to punish those who planned the plot.

"When the Gothamites heard of the approach of the messengers, they were as anxious to escape punishment as they were to preserve their meadow, so they came together to think of a way to save themselves.

"When the King's messengers arrived at Gotham they found some of the inhabitants endeavoring to drown an eel in a pond. Others were dragging their carts and wagons to the roof of the barns to shade the wood of the roof from the sun's rays. Some others were rolling their cheeses down a hill, saying that they hoped to have them roll themselves into Nottingham Market. Still others were so engaged in hedging a cuckoo into a snare that they failed to hear the soldiers or anyone else when they were called.

"So, seeing these foolish acts, the King's messengers considered the villagers all fools and re-

turned to tell the King that they were quite too foolish to deserve any chastisement.

"The Gothamites, however, laughed heartily when they found they had outwitted the King and his soldiers, and to this day a cuckoo bush stands upon the spot where they say the King's messengers found the villagers trying to snare the bird."

This story was also hailed as appropriate for April and the Blue Birds eagerly took the proffered papers and hurried away.

"Where shall we go next?" asked Norma.

"We'll go to Betty's house, which is on the road, and ask her mother to give us some candy receipts. She always has a new kind of candy to make, you know," said Mrs. Talmage.

So the car full of children went to Betty's house and were soon listening to a new kind of walnut fudge that made all of them smack their lips in imagined approval of the candy.

"Now then, I think we must hurry home to see what we have in the Winter Nest that can be used for an Easter number," said Mrs. Talmage.

"We'd better stop at Catlin's place and get the stories she promised us," reminded Ruth.

So they stopped and received the story written by Mrs. Catlin, and then hurried on to the Winter Nest for work.

Before four o'clock that afternoon they had enough appropriate ideas for a fine Easter magazine, and, with papers under their arms, they started for the publishing offices.

But they found the Bobolinks in such a state of surprise and excitement that the promise to hear the Easter stories was quite forgotten. The moment the Blue Birds opened the door of the barn, Ned shouted to Ruth:

"What do you think we have got?"

"Goodness, I don't know! When did you get it?" said Ruth.

"Just after you girls left us this morning. Someone brought it to the house, but as Mrs. Talmage and you Blue Birds were gone, he brought it to us at the office!" laughed Jinks, gayly.

"Do tell us and don't keep us guessing!" cried Dot.

"You haven't guessed once! Try it!" teased Don.

"It's something from Uncle Ben!" declared Ruth.

"Pooh! Why would he mail something so important when he expects to come down from the city to-night?" scorned Ned.

"Oh, you didn't say it came by mail! In that case it must be some news from Flutey! Is it?" cried Ruth, seeing the boys look at each other as she spoke.

"Yes, it is, and it is the finest article we will have in this Easter Magazine, for it is the real thing!" declared Mete, eagerly.

"Do tell us what it is!" cried most of the Blue Birds impatiently.

So, with great pretension of secrecy, Ned opened the papers he had hidden in his desk when he saw the girls run into the barn.

"Here's a pen and ink sketch of the plans of the nests Flutey proposes to build on the vast woodland back of the house at Happy Hills."

Ned spread out the sketch made by an architect and the Blue Birds bent eagerly over the flat desk to study the plan.

It appeared that each nest would hold six bunks, three on each side, and a place for a wider bunk at one end of the structure where the Mother Bird would sleep. Between each bunk there would be a locker built so that the owner of the adjoining bunk could use the locker for clothing, or a seat, while retiring or dressing in the morning.

The Nests would be equipped with electric lights and would be about fifteen feet square. Strong posts held up a roof pitched to a center angle so that rain would shed from all sides. This roof extended for two feet out over the posts so that the rain could not beat down or in upon the bunks or lockers. On a clear day the entire Nest would be open on the sides, but should it rain, stout canvas shades made upon rollers could be drawn down and fastened to buttons on each side and at the bottom, just as the curtains of an automobile are buttoned down.

A gallery of three feet width extended all about the Nest outside of the curtained section, and this gallery was railed in by a three-foot high rail and posts to keep little ones from falling off the platform, which was raised about two or

three feet from the ground to keep the Nest dry. Under the floor of the Nest was a dug-out and concreted cellar where toys, tools and other things belonging to the occupants of the Nest could be kept at night, or when not in use.

The Blue Birds and Bobolinks were delighted with the wonderful plan spread out before them, and Ruth murmured, "Who'd have ever dreamed it? Only a year ago we started this Blue Bird and Bobolink Club!"

"That isn't all, Fluff! Here's another plan for the big recreation hall for the Little Citizens!" added Ned, replacing the plan for Nests by one of a large building.

"You see, this, too, is built so it can be wide open on fine days, and protected by rain-proof canvas curtains when it rains. Here will be the long tables where the children eat meals, and every chair is ordered so that it can be quickly folded and stacked up when not in use. When it is open for use, a patented catch locks it so it can't close up as most of these folding chairs do. The tables are folding affairs, too, and the whole refectory can be quickly cleared when the Little Citizens want to play games or dance. Aunt

Selina says she is going to have good music at Happy Hills this summer and teach the Little Citizens all the Folk Dances known as well as the marching songs and other dances—such as flower dances, butterfly dances, etc."

The more they heard, the more amazed the Blue Birds became, and when Jinks said, "Tell them about the little farms!" Ruth exclaimed, "Where did you hear all of this!"

"In the thick letter Flutey sent with the pictures."

"Were they sent to you boys?" Dot asked suspiciously.

"The registered package was addressed to the 'Blue Bird & Bobolink Publishing Company,' so you see, Miss Smarty, we had as much right to open and read it as you would have had!" retorted Don.

"Here, here, don't you two get into an argument while all of this big business has to be attended to!" warned Jinks.

"Well, hurry and tell us about the farms, and Dot will forget Don is alive!" laughed Ruth.

"Well, Aunt Selina writes that she had a man sent out from Washington, D. C., from the Agri-

cultural Department, and he looked over the soil and advised her where to lay out hundreds of tiny farms—patches of ground he called them. He said the Government would send all the seeds for vegetables and flowers she would need for the poor children, and it won't cost a cent! Flutey is going to hire some good farmers from the country nearby to help and teach the Little Citizens how to farm their own little patch of garden so they can raise whatever they like. All that they raise during the summer they may sell or send home.

"Each child will be given a hoe, a rake, a digging fork and a spade. But every Little Citizen has to work in the garden for at least an hour each day—Flutey says this will give them good exercise and make them like farming after a time."

"Oh, Ned, it is all so grand that I can hardly believe it!" sighed Ruth.

Just then Uncle Ben came in to remind the publishers that they needed a light, for it was much later than anyone had realized. When he appeared through the door-way he was greeted

with a shout as is seldom heard, even in the country.

But he was soon as interested in the plans and sketches as the children, and he declared that Flutey was certainly making up for the years she had lost.

"Now, as she has taken the steps to start the work at once, I believe I will write her some suggestions. She must have a row of little bathing houses where the Little Citizens can hang their wet suits when they come out of the shallow little lake. She must have a ball-diamond for the boys to play baseball, and a big Council Ring where Woodcraft can be taught and practised every day. She must have books and a supply of stuff for the children to use when they weave grass-mats or work a bead-loom. She ought to have someone to teach a class in Nature each day, and a physical culture teacher to start a training class. I see where I shall have to advertise in this Easter Number for some good kind teachers who will go to Happy Hills for the summer on a reasonable salary. That will pay the magazine for advertising and reach a teacher who would like this kind of a vacation."

"That sounds just like Uncle Ben, doesn't it?" said Ned, gratefully.

"But he'd better write that ad mighty quick, 'cause we are going to finish our dummy to-morrow!" bragged Don.

"What, on Sunday!" cried Uncle Ben, pretending to be shocked, for he knew Don had forgotten it was Saturday.

Not willing to admit that he was mistaken, Don retorted, "Well, I just guess there are lots of New York printers that work on Sundays—if they have to hurry up with a job!"

Uncle Ben laughed heartily, and patted Don on the head.

"I will wager anything that Don Starr won't be a minister when he grows up!" declared Jinks.

"No, nor a canal-boat driver as he planned he'd be the time we took that trip on the Erie Canal Boat!" laughed Mete.

"Nor a lumberman as he engaged to be while we were in the Canadian forests!" added Dot, willing to pay back her twin for his unkind remark a short time before.

"Don was determined to be a broncho buster

when we were down on Grandpa's ranch in Texas, you know," added Mete, teasingly.

"Ah, say, all of you! Can't you let a feller alone for a secont! All them things happened when I was a little boy—now, I am grown up and know my own mind! I am going to be a man just like Uncle Ben, with plenty of money to help everyone. I'm goin' to hunt up boys and girls who like to print papers and we will all publish enough magazines to let every kid in the world have a copy every month!" declared Don, manfully.

"You're all right, Don, my boy! Just stick to that ambition and you'll get there!" laughed Jinks.

"Yes, Don *is* all right! It takes a man with mettle like Don's to be able to down all of the enemies of a good plan, and to make that good plan worth something to the world," commended Uncle Ben.

So Don felt very much encouraged, indeed, when he found he was favored by Uncle Ben in this speech.

"Uncle Ben, what will Flutey do with so many, many Little Citizens and only her old servants

and herself to take care of them?" wondered Betty.

"I have a plan for her that I think will work out very well on that point. It is my intention to send out little booklets telling all about the Blue Birds' plan at Happy Hills. The booklet will have pictures of the beautiful country, of the brook, of the Nests, of the general buildings, and other views which will interest the public. Then there will be explained what we need most: First, the Little Citizens who are in greatest need of a summer in the country; next, of funds to conduct such a large plan successfully; and then willing and interested young men and women who will agree to spend the summer at Happy Hills, each one to have charge of one Nest of six children and to receive a small salary for his and her time and labor."

"Oh, maybe we can print the booklet!" cried Don.

"I have been hoping that you could find time to get in this work. I would much rather send the May number of your magazine to the city printers to press and bind and mail, after you have finished the preliminary work on it, and

have you, instead of using time on that manual labor, get out these little booklets for me," said Uncle Ben, seriously.

"Why—you seem to have some especial reason for it!" said Ned.

"Yes, I have. I want your publishing company's name at the bottom of the back cover of these booklets. I want to be able to state that the Blue Birds and Bobolinks set up the type, printed the pages and bound the leaves of this Little Citizens' pamphlet for the love of the Cause. That these little Blue Birds and Bobolinks—the eldest of them not more than fourteen and the youngest seven—planned and started the great benevolent work that is proving to help so many children of the city. That these little workers have tried so hard in every way to carry out their ideas, that now they are actually running their own printing plant, getting out a magazine each month and doing their own job work. That every boy in the Bobolink Band can set type, make linotype and run a press or stitcher."

"But why advertise us so much, Uncle Ben?" laughed Jinks.

"I'm not advertising *you*—I am giving the public the facts that boys and girls of to-day can accomplish great things if their work and play is judicially selected. I want to show other children how much fun you all get out of this big idea, and at the same time hundreds and hundreds of children are blessed and hundreds of Grownups are awaking to a sense of generosity and responsibility of the poor Little Citizens. But this pamphlet must be a work of art, children, for I shall spare no expense in selecting hand-made paper and excellent photographs for it. I know you can do fine work and I shall help you all I can in producing it in this book."

"Oh, dear, I wish this old Easter Number was finished, so we could begin on the booklet!" sighed Dot, impatiently.

"That is just the trouble with you, Dot; you are wild about a thing one minute and then get tired of it the next!" exclaimed Don, scornfully.

"Why, Dot, you were so happy over the Easter Number this noon that you wished we could think up some scheme for giving the Little Citizens a good time on Easter Monday!" exclaimed Ruth, reproachfully.

"Well, so I did, but this Happy Hills business and Uncle Ben's book is so much more interesting than an Easter party!" said Dot.

"I'm so sorry to hear you say that, as I had a little plan I wished to suggest to-night for Easter Monday!" sighed Uncle Ben, pretending to be disappointed.

"Oh, do tell us what it is!" cried Dot, at once forgetting her previous disregard of Easter Monday.

Everyone laughed, and Uncle Ben added, "I shall have to wait until after dinner for that. If any of you Blue Birds or Bobolinks cannot come over to the publishing office to-night for an hour, let me know so we can postpone the meeting, although I would really like to have it settled."

"It is Saturday, you know, and no school to-morrow, so I'm sure we can all be here," replied Jinks.

So each one went home with the delightful promise of having Uncle Ben explain his fine ideas for Easter Monday.

CHAPTER X

LITTLE CITIZENS' EASTER EGG PARTY

Although Dot Starr had recklessly declared that she wished everything with the Easter Number was over with so she could get to work on the Happy Hills booklet, she really did not mean it, for she was just as anxious as anyone to bolt her dinner that evening and hurry back to the barn.

When she arrived at the house—at least ten feet in advance of Don and Mete all of the way—she rushed to the dining-room.

"Goodness gracious! Isn't dinner ready yet?" she called to the maid, as she stood in the doorway frowning at the table which was all ready to place the dinner on it at the proper time.

"It tain't time yet, Miss Dot," replied the maid.

"Well, all of the publishers have to hurry and get back to our office to-night. This is a special occasion and we have piles of work to do there," retorted Dot.

"Dear me, Miss Dot, I never did see so much fussin' as all you children do over that pesky barn business!" replied the maid, who was a privileged being, having been in the family for years.

"Pooh! You will never understand the printing business—you spend so much time setting the table and washing dishes!" reproved Dot, turning to leave the room.

"Mebbe so, but I've heard your ma say that it doesn't matter so much *what* we do as the *way* in which we do it!" replied wise little Jenny.

"Oh, yes, yes! I s'pose so. But tell me, Jenny, are there any doughnuts in the crock in the pantry?" asked Dot, suddenly having an inspiration before she closed the door of the dining-room.

"Yes, but your ma doesn't like you to eat anything just before dinner, you know," reminded the maid.

"Who's going to eat! I only asked you if there were any. I have to take a bagful with me to-night," said Dot.

The maid watched Dot run to the pantry with

misgivings in her heart, for she knew the Starr twins only too well!

"There, now, I have to take these to the office to-night," explained Dot, gathering up the four corners of an old napkin which she had filled with fresh doughnuts.

She ran from the room none too soon, for Don put in an appearance immediately after she had gone.

He looked about and found the room vacant, so he slipped over to the serving-table to see what the dessert would be that evening.

"Pshaw! It's floating island and I love it so! I hoped they would have bread puddin' so I could be excused before the others!" sighed he, gazing longingly at the deep dishes of his favorite dessert.

Jenny heard someone enter the room and quickly she appeared from the pantry to protect her dinner items. It seemed that Jenny or any of the Grownups that happened to be about always felt it incumbent to step into the dining-room if the twins were heard prowling about before meal-time.

"I just wanted to know what you had for

dessert, Jenny," explained Don, turning upon his heel to go from the room whistling a lively tune.

"That's all right, Master Don, but I noticed you changed the plates some. I gave the baby the deepest dish as she never has solid food at night!" remarked the astute Jenny.

Don hesitated in the doorway while he watched Jenny go to the serving-table and replace Bob's dish of pudding where it had been before he tampered with the arrangement of the dishes to make the most dessert fall to his lot when served that night.

Slamming the door to show his disapproval of Jenny's methods, Don ran up to look for Dot.

The door to the playroom was locked. Don shouted, "Heigh! let me in! Who's here, anyway?"

"Me! I'll be there in a secont!" called Dot.

"Up to somethin', I know!" replied Don, starting a tattoo on the door-panels.

In a few moments Dot flung open the door and Don went in looking keenly about for a clue to the cause of his twin's locking the door—a most unusual procedure.

Finding no hint of any subtle work, Don said, "We've got Floating Island for dessert."

"O-oh! really! I forgot to look, but I wish we could have dinner right away! We will be late for that meeting if we don't eat before the others!"

"I've been thinking that as this is a special evening, Mumzie wouldn't care if we ate our dessert first—just to save time afterwards," suggested Don, failing to remark, however, that he had tried to manipulate the dishes so that the most pudding would come to him when it was served.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Don, I thought I would just eat my soup and bread and be excused from the rest of dinner 'cause I want to hurry back to the barn. But I don't know about leaving that pudding!" ventured Dot, thoughtfully.

"What would you say to eating it *now* and save time?" suggested Don.

"Hum! I should say that was a very good idea—of course it is just to save time!" added Dot, looking knowingly at Don.

So the twins crept downstairs very quietly to prevent Jenny from hearing them when they

reached the dining-room. Don had Dot hold the door open while he tip-toed across the floor and selected Bab's deep dish and another full dish; then he hurried out and both of the culprits managed to reach the glass-inclosed side-porch without being seen.

The pudding soon disappeared and the twins smacked their lips as the dishes were placed under a taboret near the glass door leading to the sun-parlor.

Just then the gong sounded for dinner and Don looked at Dot.

"Are you hungry?"

"Not a speck! I'd rather run back to the office and work," replied she, valiantly.

"So'd I. Let's leave a note for Daddum and then run!"

While Don scribbled a note on a dirty piece of paper he found in his pocket, using a chewed-off pencil-point to write it with, Dot scouted and crept upstairs to get her coat and the bag of doughnuts. When she returned to the porch, Don had the note of explanation quite ready to deliver.

"How will you get it in, unless we are caught?" asked Dot.

"I'll tie it to the door-knob and tell Jim, as we run past the barn, that someone left a message at the front door, and he'd better see who it is for!"

This was done, and the twins impressed Jim with the importance of running to the house to see that the master had the message at once. Of course, Jim thought it was a telegram, and ran all of the way from the garage to the house to find a scrawl from the twins.

Don and Dot were almost through the woods that divided Mossy Glen from Oakwoods, when Dot tripped over a root, stumbled and fell. The bag broke open and the doughnuts rolled out in every direction.

"O-oh! There goes our dinner!" cried she, fearfully.

"I'll find them, never fear! It's a good thing it isn't very dark or we couldn't see them so easy!"

As the bag was destroyed by the fall, the twins had to distribute the doughnuts about their persons as best they could. Consequently, Don's

coat pockets were filled, while Dot's white middy-blouse was belted in tight about the waist, and the upper part bulged out with doughnuts.

Long before Uncle Ben and the others came to the barn Don and Dot began regretting their hasty act. Both children were healthy and active and had the usual enormous appetite of growing country children. Consequently, long before seven-thirty, they were so hungry that the doughnuts were quickly consumed. Then, although still hungry, they did not dare to go home for fear they would be sent to bed as a punishment for breaking the rules of the dining-room.

It took all of Uncle Ben's power of oratory to make the twins forget the gnawing that was so uncomfortable, but they managed to survive the evening and looked forward to a foraging party in the pantry as soon as they reached home.

When all of the Blue Birds and Bobolinks, as well as some of the parents, were gathered in the publishing house, the project for an Easter party was placed before them.

"You know, perhaps, that every Easter Monday at the White House in Washington, D. C., is devoted to the children. A great Easter Egg

Party is given, and this has come to be known as the National Picnic, or Easter Egg Rolling at the White House.

"If the day is fine, great crowds of children are admitted to the lawns at the back of the President's house, where they roll their Easter eggs down the slopes of the lawn and have great fun trying to catch them with a spoon.

"Stationed just before the great gates leading to the grounds are four big policemen to keep order. On the street, before reaching the gates, are venders of hot peanuts, popcorn, and gayly colored balloons.

"Now, it is my plan to secure permission from the City Park Commissioner for an Easter Monday Egg Picnic at Bronx Park, or Van Courtlandt Park, whichever he gives us. We can send out notices through the press—Mr. Richards will see to that for us—and each Little Citizen who comes and has no Easter eggs of his or her own, we will provide with a small basket holding four eggs and a picnic spoon.

"The picnic will start at eleven o'clock and hot peanuts and popcorn will be distributed from

various section-stands at one o'clock while the children eat their eggs.

"We can carry out the plan of our Capitol's Game very closely, so that the Little Citizens in New York and those at Washington will be playing the game at the same time. Maybe the other large cities, such as Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco, will join in this National Picnic next year.

"Now, provided we can secure the funds to buy the peanuts, popcorn and eggs, what do you think of it?"

The moment Uncle Ben finished, a grand chorus of voices applauded the scheme, but the elders seemed to hesitate in giving their unbiased approval.

"Of course you know, Ben, that the Park Commissioner at Washington found so much damage had been done to the slopes of the White House lawns that the game was forbidden," said Mrs. Talmage.

"I can explain that! Until the plan was approved by President Hayes, the children played the game any old way, and so great was the motley crowd of sightseers and peddlers with their

push-carts and stands that all law and order were broken. But after the children were invited to come to the grassy lawns at the back of the White House, and the peddlers were made to keep to the streets, the children were so orderly that it was found to be entirely practical to give them the yearly Easter picnic.

"It would be my plan to give the children the use of the public play-grounds at Bronx Park, as well as the baseball grounds and other short grassy places where the public is allowed to use the grass. As the season is too early to have the grass grown very long, there can be no drawback found with that. Then if the little bags of popcorn and peanuts are kept by the ladies and distributed by Blue Birds and Bobolinks, as well as those children who will offer to help the Little Citizens—I can always call on the Boy Scouts to assist me in these plans, I know—there need be no trampling of grass by push-carts or peddlers. Of course, there will be such a scattering of egg-shells and peanut shells all over the grass that it will look like a varied-colored field instead of green grass. But the Little Citizens can be made to see that it is for their benefit if they are told

and made to pick up the shells and leave the grass as neat and clean as it was before the picnic. This is what all Boy Scouts and Woodcrafters are made to do—always leave a camping spot in first-class order and cleanliness."

"That would be fine if you could enforce the discipline, but how are you to do it with so many groups of children?" persisted Mr. Starr.

"We can do it, all right. I'll agree to do that part of the contract," laughed Uncle Ben.

"Well, then, we will wish you luck and help all we can," returned Mr. Starr.

"Very good! Now have I the earnest co-operation of the Blue Birds and Bobolinks in this plan for the Little Citizens?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Yes, indeed, you have!" shouted every one of them.

"Then, my first step will be to telephone the New York office where I will find Mr. Richards, and get him to start the newspaper articles going in the morning papers. We must have funds to secure baskets, spoons and refreshments for the picnic, to say nothing of people who will offer to color the eggs," said Uncle Ben.

While he was telephoning Mr. Richards, the Grownups discussed the plan.

"I should think that Ben would get permission from the Park Commissioner first, before announcing the scheme in the newspapers," said Mrs. Talmage.

"I've known Mr. Talmage a long time, and I find that he generally knows what he is doing. I shouldn't wonder if he has the permit, all duly signed, in his coat pocket," laughed Mr. Starr.

So the moment Uncle Ben returned to the desk, he was beset by eager questioners.

"How do you know we may have the park?" cried Don.

"What will you do if you can't get a permit?" said Ruth.

"Somebody ought to supply jitneys to carry the lame and sick from the downtown streets to the Bronx," suggested Jinks.

"Or hire trolleys and subway trains to take the mob up there," added Ned.

"Oh, please, please!" cried Uncle Ben, covering his ears with his hands to keep out the confusion.

"Now, one at a time, please!" commanded he,

as they all laughed at the expression of his face.

"Where's the signed permit?" asked Mrs. Talmage.

"In my coat pocket! Want to see it?" laughed Uncle Ben.

"Ha! I thought so! You're what Dot would call a 'conniver'!" laughed Mr. Starr.

"But you did not expect me to propose a picnic that I knew would be hailed with such approval from the Blue Birds and Bobolinks, and not be prepared to fulfill my plans?" ventured Uncle Ben, taking the precious envelope from his pocket and giving it to Ned to pass around.

Many ideas for the picnic and many letters were written that night, and in the morning the Blue Birds and Bobolinks were overjoyed to read an account of the new venture for the help of Little Citizens in most of the morning papers. Requests were made for donations of money, bags of popcorn, peanuts, eggs, and workers who would assist at coloring the eggs for the great picnic. Each article wound up by asking the readers to watch the evening papers and morning columns for reports on the movement.

In the evening papers the address of the com-

mittee was given, where donations could be sent for the National Picnic.

In the following morning's papers it was announced that the Interborough Company had offered to carry free on its subway trains running from Brooklyn to the Bronx, all passengers who presented a little ticket, egg-shaped and printed, to say that the bearer was a Little Citizen bound for the National Picnic.

Also, it was found that some of the large taxicab companies had offered to take cripples or sick children who would be permitted to attend the picnic from their homes or hospitals to the Park, if orders were left the day before with names and addresses of the Little Citizens.

"My! But this is getting to be great!" sighed Don.

"Oh, I do hope it will be warm and dry and clear on Easter Monday!" cried Dot.

"We must pray and pray for good weather, for this is a Golden Rule picnic, you see, and God will surely smile upon the work. Then if He smiles it will be sunny and fine!" said little Betty, reverently.

"Let's all pray every time we remember the

plan. We ought to pray all the time for our Little Citizens' camp at Happy Hills, 'cause that is the only way we will ever manage to get that work accomplished," added Ruth, seriously.

"Goodness, Ruth, what would become of our school lessons if we had to pray all the time for Little Citizens!" asked Dot.

"Oh, I don't mean you will have to kneel down or even shut your eyes for a long time—I mean just to whisper to God so no one else can hear you, that you need help for Little Citizens at Happy Hills. You remember what the dear Lord said, to tell our Father in secret, and the Father who hears in secret will answer our prayers. That's what I mean—to whisper to Him whenever we happen to remember Little Citizens," explained Ruth.

"I really think Ruth has explained in simple terms what many a theologian tries to write about or preach to others," commented Uncle Ben, in a low tone to the Grownups.

Easter Sunday dawned so bright and warm that it was impossible to think that rain or cold had ever happened during the past months of winter. The promise for a fine warm Easter

Monday was very encouraging, and many a child felt happy in the anticipation of the wonderful picnic.

The Sunday papers gave much space to the National Picnic, as it came to be called, and reports of all the things done and doing were given in full, for all readers seemed tremendously interested.

One paper gave the following report:

"On Good Friday, the day the public school children had set aside for the donating of one egg each to the fund of the Easter Monday Egg Rolling, the welfare workers who had offered to count and pack the eggs in the boxes presented by the Folding Box Company, found it necessary to ask the assistance of some of the older scholars and high school pupils, as so many eggs had been received. Some of the school children brought a dozen each and many of them donated half a dozen each. It is found that not only will there be plenty to distribute, by giving four in each basket, but there will be plenty to send about in the small baskets on Saturday night, so that all Little Citizens who cannot be present at the picnic will have their Easter eggs at home. Many of

the baskets will go to Homes and Institutions."

Another paper told all about the coloring of the eggs.

"It is fortunate that an Uncle Ben stands sponsor for the children who are issuing a magazine of their very own and doing the work on it in their own publishing house at Oakdale. For this Uncle Ben, well known to the publishing men of this city, is as much a child as any of his many nieces and nephews. It was his idea to tread in the footsteps of Washington and give the city children of New York an Easter Egg Picnic.

"Through the untiring labors of Uncle Ben and his Blue Bird and Bobolink Company, all the eggs have been donated and were taken to the many dye-shops in the city, where the bright-hued vats of dye were waiting to color the eggs. Many of the largest companies offered to do the work free of cost for the philanthropy, while the smaller shops charged a nominal fee for the cost of time to pay the help. In this manner all of the eggs were dyed in beautiful colors."

Another Sunday paper made a fine story of the work done in the kindergartens and at meetings for the Little Citizens. When the first article

appeared for the plan, there were offers of help from the most unexpected sources. Thus, it happened that the question of baskets was soon disposed of, for every child in a kindergarten school was given raffia or grass and started weaving a basket for eggs. Then it was decided to send in all the baskets made in the public schools to one great headquarters at the Bronx Park Buildings and place the eggs in them. Each child, on Easter Monday, would then be given a basket of eggs, regardless of who did the weaving.

Besides these baskets, some kind-hearted lady bought up the entire stock of a wholesale house, so that many great-gross of lovely baskets were delivered at the store-rooms.

A millionaire, whose country estate located in Virginia bordered on the vast plantations of peanut growers, sent up a hundred bags of Virginia peanuts with orders to have them roasted on time and delivered at the store-rooms of the Bronx. Such a large donation was found to supply all of the peanuts needed, and the paper bags to hold the nuts were purchased at cost of manufacture from the fund on hand.

The paper-bag manufacturer told Uncle Ben that he would have given the bags gladly, but the cost of paper stock on account of the war was so high that a quantity such as would be needed for the Little Citizens would use up all of his surplus stock. But he was eager and willing to supply the paper at actual cost, so that he made no profit, and the children really benefited.

The greater part of the Saturday before Easter found children everywhere popping the corn for the sugared popcorn. It was a noticeable feature of this picnic that everyone, rich and poor, took a personal interest in the success of the plan, and wherever it was possible, the children did what they could to help along the picnic, so that the popcorn was popped and given by the school-children just as the eggs were donated and the baskets woven.

Then dawned Easter Monday!

What a glorious day it was! The sun was dazzling, the air so warm and balmy that one was tempted to believe it must be the first of June. The grass was green and the buds fairly burst to open their lovely petals to the sun. The Park looked most inviting and the Grownups of

the committee, with Uncle Ben, were at the stock-room early in the day to see that the last few things were attended to properly.

The Blue Birds and Bobolinks arrived in the city on one of the first trains of the morning, and the ladies escorted the Band to the section of the Park which was to be given over to the egg rollers.

My, but that was a wonderful sight!

Thousands of children, each with a basket of eggs and a spoon, happily enjoying the warm sunshine and fresh air! Little Citizens of all sizes, ages and color, laughing, singing, running and playing in the wide expanse of the public park! Many a kodak snapped the pictures; several motion picture companies took reels and reels of the scene, while the press sent its photographers to get pictures for the newspapers.

Some generous man ordered a number of city bands to the park and the martial and patriotic music made little feet hop and skip over the ground. Even Grownups smiled and kept time to the music.

When the game of rolling Easter eggs became tiresome, there were other things to do. After

two hours of wholesome fun, the Bands summoned the Little Citizens, and they all fell in line, each company commanded by a Boy Scout who kept order. All companies were so ordered that divisions marched past the commissary house, led by a brass band.

An American flag was flying from a pole over the house where the popcorn and peanuts were to be given out, and at the single shot of a gun, the flag would be partially lowered as a signal. At the shot and the signal, all the bands were to start in unison to play "March, march, march, march," the grand marching song by Farwell. Any child who knew it was asked to sing as they marched past the house where scores of busy hands distributed the bags of peanuts and popcorn.

As it turned out, this march was the most impressive scene of all. Many children knew the air and some knew the words. As the music was so inspiring and catchy, even those who had never heard of it before were soon humming as they marched. There were no lagging footsteps, for the bands kept up the time and all the Little

Citizens were eager to march and secure their bags.

That night, as Uncle Ben treated the Blue Birds and Bobolinks to dinner at a fine big hotel in the city, Ruth sighed, "Oh, it was a wonderful day, but there was just one disappointment!"

Her voice was so mournful and the words so dramatic that Uncle Ben asked, "And *what* could that be?"

"No Flutey to see it all!" said Ruth.

"Ah, but fancy her delight when she reads the papers and sees all of the wonderful pictures of what we did for her Little Citizens!" said Uncle Ben.

CHAPTER XI

BILLY MARCHANT—LITTLE CITIZEN

Fortunately, the Easter vacation gave the Blue Birds and Bobolinks an opportunity to sleep late the morning following the Easter Picnic in New York or there would have been a number of sleepy heads nodding over their school-books that day.

On Tuesday evening, after the picnic, Uncle Ben came to Oakdale carrying a huge bundle of newspapers. He said the children could look through them and cut out the articles mentioning the successful National Party in the Bronx.

There were so many papers and so many stories that it took the Blue Birds the greater part of Wednesday to clip them, while the Bobolinks were busy trimming and pasting the clippings in a scrap book provided by Uncle Ben.

All of the papers declared the plan to be a good one that ought to be repeated each year, and

every paper had some story to tell of a Little Citizen. These tales of how the children sacrificed to go to the picnic made fine heart-interest for the larger work at Happy Hills.

One of the stories sounded improbable, but it was true, as the children soon learned from Uncle Ben.

"A little boy named Joe was given a ticket to the Easter Picnic, but he had to work every day, including Sundays, so he could not leave his work long enough to see the fun in Bronx Park.

"Friday morning—Good Friday—he was sent to carry to the retailer's a huge bundle of ready-made clothes from the sweatshop in which he worked. Here, on the East Side of the city, stooped a score of bearded, tired-looking men, over machines, or squatted upon benches—stitching, trimming, and pressing men's garments. The steam from the pressing, the foul air arising from so many men crowded in so small a room, the lack of sunlight and insufficient windows, made the place intolerable. Still it was not as dreadful as the many homes where the garments were sent to be worked upon. Sometimes, in one small room, three or four were compelled to sew,

press, and finish these heavy woolen clothes, while washing hung over a stove, crying babies crawled over the floor, and sick mothers were compelled to stitch, stitch, stitch, as if salvation depended upon their work.

"Well, Joe had had no breakfast this fine Friday morning, and he dragged his weary feet over the sidewalk while trying to balance the mass of clothing upon his shoulder. He was not more than nine years old, yet he had the face and precocity of twenty.

"Finally, reaching a corner where he could select either of two streets to reach his destination, he decided to choose the street where private residences adorned both sides of the street. Joe seldom went by this street as it made him too envious of the welfare of other children whom he saw playing in the small green enclosures of front yards. But to-day, with the ticket in his shirt, he felt as if he must see some of the pleasure to be had by other children on Easter Monday.

"He reached the middle of the block, and leaned the heavy burden against a lamp-post that stood in front of one of the handsomest houses

on the block. He was too tired to look at the house or even glance about to see if he were seen by others, but remembering the precious ticket, he slid the mass of clothing down to the ground and fumbled for the pastboard. He drew forth a dirty rag and eagerly untied the knots that bound something safely inside. Taking a crust of bread from this refuge, Joe hastily munched it and then tenderly took out the ticket.

"He failed to notice that a boy of his own age was curiously watching him from the window of the grand house, with his nose flattened against the plate glass.

"This little boy was the only son of Mr. Marchant, the Wall Street Magnate. His home was one of joy and love. His clothes—this morning he wore a jaunty blue velvet suit with a wide silk scarf knotted about his neck—were always the best and finest, his teachers most considerate and kind, and everything his heart wished for was given him as long as it was not harmful.

"Little Billy Marchant had never known the pangs of hunger or the weariness of the body, such as Joe endured daily. He did not dream

there were such awful things in his beautiful city as he now saw from the window of his lovely home. But he saw, with his own eyes, the greed with which this thin little boy ate the crust and he wondered what it could be that the boy was smiling at so lovingly. He determined to find out.

"No one was in the room, and no one saw him open the massive front door and creep out. He left the door ajar and quietly opened the outer doors. Then he hurried down the brownstone steps and ran over to Joe.

" 'Good-morning, little boy—my name's Billy Marchant, what's yours?' asked Billy in a friendly tone.

"Joe looked at Billy in a dull, stupid way, although he was not at all stupid. Then he looked up at the house and the open front doors.

" 'Why do you wanta know?' asked Joe, suspiciously.

" 'I was wishing I knew what that thing was that you held so close in your hands,' replied Billy.

"Instantly Joe took alarm and hurriedly wrapped the ticket up and tried to thrust it back

inside of his shirt. He glowered at Billy, but only saw a friendly smile and an encouraging look.

" 'It's nawthin' but a ticket to a picnic!' explained he.

" 'A picnic! In the winter?' cried Billy, sceptically.

" 'Yep. Up in Bronx Park on Easter Monday. Some Blue Birds and Bobolinks are going to give the Little Citizens a rousin' good time, an' I gotta ticket, but I have to work an' can't go—unless I quit my job and take chances!' said Joe, now all enthusiasm because of the subject.

"But Billy had never heard of Blue Birds or Bobolinks, nor of Little Citizens, so he thought Joe was delirious because he was so hungry. Hence, he planned instant relief.

" 'Will you come into my house and have a nice breakfast with me?' asked he.

"Joe looked amazed and shook his head.

" 'Come on in, I want to talk with you and hear about Easter Monday. You can send that bundle by our butler,' generously offered Billy, never dreaming that the butler would have felt so in-

sulted at being asked to carry the great bundle that he would have served notice instantly.

"But Joe was wise. He smiled tolerantly at the little inexperienced lad and said, 'Nah, I coulden' come in that fine place—jus' look at me! Yer mother would have fits if she foun' me eatin' in your dinin' room wid a "stiff" standin' back of my chair waitin' t' han' me a finger-bowl!'

"And Joe bent double while laughing wildly at the funny picture he had given. Joe had seen grand folks dining at hotels, while he stood over the escape-ventilators where steam from the kitchen regions warmed many a shivering street urchin in cold weather.

"Billy was bright enough to grasp the situation and he hurriedly jammed his hand into his pocket and took out a crisp new dollar bill his father had given him that morning when the boy slid down the hand-rail of the great front stairway to kiss his father good-bye.

"'Well, take this, anyway, and get a nice breakfast. And now, tell me where this picnic is to be—I want to get a ticket and go.'

"Joe looked enviously at the dollar, for it represented a whole week's wages and with it he could

hire a boy to take his place on Monday, but he was an honorable little chap and he said: 'I haven't earned it, and I can't sell you anythin' and I can't take it fer charity 'cause there air so many others who need it more'n I do. I wish I could sell you somethin'!'

"'What's in the bundle?' asked Billy eagerly.

"'Clothes, clothes, clothes! Oh, I git so sick of seein' clothes all the time, that I wish folks never hed to wear 'em!'

"Billy laughed, for he had never heard so many amusing things in his life. Then, as he looked at the bundle and then at Joe's ragged make-shift for clothing, he said kindly, 'But you don't seem to have many yourself, for all the clothes in the bundle!'

"'Humph! Yeh didn' think I'd wear my only decent ones to work in, did yeh? I hev to save 'em fer cases like this picnic where a feller has t' look clean and decent to git a look at the fun!'

"Even as Joe spoke, Billy thought of a plan.

"'Say, Joe, why couldn't you sell me these clothes of yours. I'll pay you five dollars for them and you can wear your good ones until you can buy another suit. I don't know how much

boys' clothes cost but maybe you could get some for five dollars. If you can't do it, I will give you as much for this suit as it will cost you to buy another new suit."

"Joe looked at Billy, doubting his own hearing. What was this boy after, anyway!

" 'What's yer game?' growled Joe.

" 'Game! Why, I want to go to your picnic with you and I can't go in these, can I?' and Billy glanced disdainfully at his fine velvet suit.

" 'Nah—I guess not! They'd know yeh wasn't a Little Citizen.'

" 'That's just it! But if I have a suit like yours and if you tell me where to get a ticket, I can get in with you. Maybe you will call for me, or meet me at the corner on Monday?' said Billy, anxiously.

"Joe thought seriously over this proposition.

" 'Say, where'd you git all the coin to pay me?' asked he, severely, wondering if the boy would take it from his mother's pocket-book.

" 'Ho! I've got a bank in my room that I fill up every week with nickels and dimes and that is my spending money. Then, besides that, Dad gives me an allowance each month that I can use

for anything I like. Sometimes I put it in the bank and sometimes I buy what I want most. I just spent some of it for Easter presents for my friends, but I have enough left to pay for the suit of clothes.'

"Thus reassured as to the legality of the payment, Joe thought again.

" 'Fer the life of me, I can't see that it would be doin' anything the cops could pinch me fer!' sighed he.

"Billy had never heard such terms before, but boy-like he comprehended at once just what Joe meant, and he hastily assured him that he, Joe, was not responsible for anything that he, Billy, decided to do. If Joe refused to sell the clothes to him, then he would buy a suit of someone else.

"That determination settled any doubt in Joe's mind, and he agreed to sell Billy the rags he had on for five dollars. But how to deliver them!

" 'I know,' declared Billy, eagerly. 'On Monday morning I will meet you at the corner down the street and we can go to your house and exchange them.'

"'My house! Goodness—do you know where I live?' exclaimed Joe, aghast.

"'Somewhere near your office, I suppose,' replied innocent Billy.

"'My office! Ha, ha, ha! That's rich! Why, child, I live in a piano-box that's kept in the cellar of a tenement house. It holds coal for the tenant on the first floor who takes in pressin' an' has to burn a lot of coal in the stove. I hires a corner of it at night an' she gives me a straw mat to put over the chunks to make it softer to lay on. She always keeps the cover locked so the other tenants won't steal her coal and so she locks me in at night and unlocks me in the mornin'.'

"Billy was so horrified at the awful story that he felt ill and dizzy, but Joe saw the shock his words had made and hurriedly changed the subject.

"'I kin fix it fer you! I'll wear my good clothes that I keep in the tailor-shop tool-chest, and bring this suit to the corner fer you Sunday night. Then you can put it on in your house and meet me Monday morning to go to the picnic.

But I have t' have the coin on Sunday night so's t' hire someone to take my job fer Monday!'

" 'Oh, I'll give you the money now, if you wait, but I can't get out of the house with your clothes on Monday. I will have to meet you somewhere and change!' said Billy.

"Then Joe thought again and said, 'I guess we kin fix it this way. The boy I am goin' to hire lives wid his family in a tenement downtown. I kin tell him that you will pay him ten cents fer the use of his flat to change yer clothes and to leave yer own suit there fer the day.'

" 'Ten cents! Why, I'll pay him a dollar!' cried Billy.

"Joe looked scornfully at the boy. 'Say, don't you go an' show your hand so easy-like! Why, the hull town'd be down and grabbin' yer coin if they knew where yeh lived an' who yeh war.'

"Billy saw the wisdom of this astuteness and smiled. 'All right, then—ten cents is the price.'

" 'An' don't yeh go an' wear these togs neider! Wear the worstest duds yeh kin rake together—but I guess yeh hain't got no real rough-looking clothes!' advised Joe.

" 'I'll do the best I can to please you—now

tell me where to get a ticket!' said Billy, looking fearfully over his shoulder lest he be discovered on the walk after such a long time.

"Joe saw the glance and stooped to shoulder his pack. 'Here, you take this one an' I'll git another from a pal who can't git away from the factory at all!'

"So Joe hastily thrust the precious ticket in Billy's hands and Billy insisted upon Joe's taking the dollar, for he said the ticket saved him so much worry and time that it was well worth more than the dollar.

"Joe felt that the ticket was worth ten times that sum, so he accepted the dollar as having been honestly earned. Then he repeated the time he would meet Billy early Monday morning, and started down the street with a vigor and joy he had not felt for weeks. Why was it, he kept wondering. But Uncle Ben could have told him why the whole world looked so beautiful since he met the boy who showed such interest in him.

"Joe completed his plans and everything was satisfactory to all concerned. Billy, who never before had had such vital secrets, felt as if wheels were buzzing inside of him and his parents

looked with concern at his untasted food at meal times. But he appeared perfectly happy and healthy, so they said to each other that it was the spring warmth that made everyone feel languid.

"Monday morning, before anyone except the cook and kitchen maid were up, Billy crept silently out of his room at the back of the house and tip-toed past the doors of his parents' rooms. His governess had a room on the next floor, and no one else would be stirring at that time, he knew. So he managed to get to the hall-door without being stopped. Here he met a difficulty as the butler always barred the doors at night after everyone was in, and Billy found it impossible to draw the heavy steel bar alone.

"He crept to the entry that led down to the basement where he feared the cook and scullery maid would meet him and send up to his mother. But just as he stood at the stairs listening for an opportunity to creep down and steal out of the front basement entrance, he heard the jovial milkman shout as he rattled at the iron gate of the area. From the sound of the man's voice, Billy judged that the inside door was open for air.

"He also heard the clicking of the push-button as it mechanically opened the iron gate and the milkman scuffled down the basement hallway to the kitchen at the rear. Now was Billy's chance!

"He ran downstairs, out of the opened door and up to the street. Fortunately, the milkman's assistant was in the next house and the horse and wagon stood waiting by the curb. No one was in sight as Billy rushed down the street and breathlessly turned the corner to wait at the place decided upon.

"Joe was already there, and the two boys grinned at each other in a friendly way. Joe looked Billy over carefully, and mumbled, 'Ther're pretty good clothes, but not too swell to make Hiney believe you are not a rich man's son!'

"Billy felt very humble to think he was a rich man's son and at that moment he would have taken strenuous measures to have undone the crime of having been born a 'swell.'

" 'Had yer brekfus?' asked Joe.

" 'Of course not. I never have mine until nine o'clock!'

" 'Gee! And now it's onny seven!' declared

Joe, looking up at the church clock as they walked down Broadway. 'Well, we'll git some in a place I know!'

"So Billy was introduced to a 'Lunch Room,' where everyone sat upon a high stool and ate upon an oilcloth-covered counter. Thick coffee, tasteless rolls, and a substitute for butter cost each boy five cents, but Billy enjoyed the novelty and excitement of the experience, and ate his rolls and drank his coffee with as much relish as Joe did.

" 'Say, kid, yer a sport, all right!' approved Joe, wiping his mouth on his sleeve, as Billy and he slid off the stools to make room for others who were waiting for breakfast.

"Billy felt so proud at this commendation that he would have partaken of still thicker coffee and dryer rolls if necessary.

"Joe took Billy to the two-roomed flat where Hiney lived, but Hiney was already at the tailor-shop to fill Joe's place for the day, while his hard-working mother agreed to take care of Billy's bundle for the day for ten cents, and permit him to use Hiney's corner back of a calico curtain to change his clothes. The good-natured but

stupid woman wondered why a little boy wished to take off clean neat clothes and put on dirty ragged ones, but she decided that he had to work and feared to soil his best suit.

"Joe and Billy then hurried to the nearest subway station where they showed their tickets for the Easter Picnic and were permitted to pass through without paying a fare. They were soon travelling underground.

"At Bronx Park all was gay and enchanting to both boys, as neither Billy nor Joe had ever seen or been present at anything like it.

"The boys were given a basket each, with colored eggs and a tin spoon, and had as merry a time as anyone that day. They had peanuts and popcorn, and a kind lady who saw that they had no picnic lunch, shared her generous box of lunch with them. So interested was she in these two bright boys that she asked them their names and addresses, for she said she would try to enroll them on the Little Citizens' list and see if they could have a permit to go to Happy Hills.

"This pleased Joe immensely and he wished he had some address to give the dear lady with the kind eyes. But Billy had an idea. He had

had his day of fun and knew that it mattered not now who knew his true name and address, so he said, 'I'll give you my address and Joe's letters can come to my house and he can get them from me.'

"Joe eagerly agreed to this, and Billy told the lady his name and address. But she looked hard at the little face in doubt of his telling the truth. She knew the street he mentioned and she knew the fine houses on that particular block. And she knew that no poor Little Citizen ever had a home in that section.

"Still she said nothing and wrote down the names and address given her. Soon after this the two boys ran away to watch a game of base-ball and the lady hurried over to Uncle Ben to mention the strange incident.

"Uncle Ben looked at the name and address and exclaimed, 'Why, I know Marchant well! I heard some rumor this morning of his boy's having been kidnapped during the night and no clue of him had yet been found. Let us run over to this officer and get in touch with the distracted parents at once!'

"Billy had not thought of the dreadful shock

and agony his dear father and mother would feel at his disappearance or he would not have done what he had so eagerly planned and accomplished that Monday.

"The officer quickly ran to the building where a telephone was found and the police headquarters notified. The Sergeant soon got in touch with the parents, and they in turn hurried out to Bronx Park in their automobile to identify their child.

"Meanwhile, the lady and policeman kept near Joe and Billy, quite unknown to the Little Citizens, who watched the ball game so eagerly. When the officer was beckoned by another to quietly bring Billy over to the building where the anxious parents waited, the lady went up to Joe and his companion and whispered, 'I want both of you to come with me for a moment, while we see if you are both good, true Little Citizens before enlisting you on our rolls.'

"Both boys followed, with no suspicion of the truth, until Mr. Marchant saw Billy follow Joe through the doorway of the outer office. Mrs. Marchant could not contain her joy and she flew out and fell upon her knees and hugged Billy

until he was breathless. Joe stood by, scowling at the trick he felt had been played upon Billy and him.

"When Billy could gasp, however, he cried, 'Oh, Daddy, this is my friend Joe. We are both Little Citizens now, and I've had the best time in my whole life! I'm going to Happy Hills with Joe in the summer—this lady said we might!'

"Then the whole story was told and it was soon seen that Billy was the only culprit in the plot, for Joe was an innocent victim of Billy's wiles. Even Billy had not thought of the trouble his disappearance for one day's enjoyment would make, and he wondered and wondered why the policemen smiled at the way he introduced his best boy friend and told the interested circle how he got out of the basement door that morning and where he ate breakfast.

"That was Joe's lucky day, for Mr. Marchant elected himself Joe's guardian and has agreed to send the boy to school at Oakdale, where he will board with Mrs. Mason at the Mason farm. In thanksgiving for Billy's safe return, the millionaire has given a donation of five thousand dollars to Little Citizens' work at Happy Hills. He also

told Uncle Ben that he wished to become a member of the League and to have Billy work with the Blue Birds and Bobolinks in their wonderful plan.

"Mrs. Marchant also joined the League of Grownups and donated a thousand dollars of her own to be used in the furthering of Aunt Selina's plan for Little Citizens at Happy Hills.

"Billy and Joe were taken by Uncle Ben and introduced to the Blue Birds and Bobolinks, who were delighted to hear that Joe would be a member of Mrs. Mason's family and become a worker at the Publishing House with the Bobolinks.

"And Billy insisted upon being sent all particulars of how to start a Band of his own for Little Citizens' work in the city, and thus began the work of expansion."

CHAPTER XII

OTHER STORIES OF LITTLE CITIZENS

The press story of the millionaire's son Billy was so interesting that it read more like fiction than fact, and every paper copied it in full as it made splendid reading in connection with the Easter Monday Picnic at the Bronx. Then suburban papers copied the story and soon the news of the movement was advertising the Cause of Little Citizens in a marvelous manner.

Ned, who had read aloud the story of Joe and Billy, said he wished something like that could occur every week as it would be the greatest spur possible to have folks help send poor and sick children to Happy Hills that summer.

Then Jinks found a short story of a Little Citizen, on an inside page of a paper, and he offered to read it to the others. It was named "Mr. Richards Finds a Heroine."

"Little Maggie Owens is only ten years old, but she already has the responsibilities of a mother of seven children, all younger than herself, for Maggie is Little Mother to her orphaned sisters and brothers.

"Jimmy Owens is nine and helps support the family with his weekly salary of two dollars, earned by being a quick, willing messenger boy for the Telegraph Company. He looks two years older and so he can pass for an age that will permit him to sign up with the company.

"May Owens is eight and has a newspaper route where she earns enough each day to be a valuable financial member of the young family.

"Next comes Frankie Owens, six and a half, and too helpless from infantile paralysis to do anything but groan.

"The other children range from Frankie down to the baby, who is just past the first year's birthday. Not that birthdays are celebrated or kept track of in this busy, buzzing hive of children, but it is mentioned as an item for consideration.

"Maggie manages the entire household and home, consisting of the aforesaid members and a home of one room on the fifth floor of a filthy

tenement house on Rivington Street on the East Side, where rents are cheap and where the agents collect every week in advance, thus sparing tenants the trouble of hoarding the money for their rent, or risking it being stolen from the crevice in the walls where it is generally hidden.

"Maggie says the top floor has advantages as well as its disadvantages. For instance, it is cheaper. The higher one climbs the less one has to pay for rent. But the water never tries to climb up in the pipes which run to the top floor, and when the wage-earners are weary at night, the fourth and fifth flights seem back-breaking.

"A second advantage is the better light and air the children get on the top floor, but the roof makes it fearfully hot in summer when the sun bakes down upon the tar or tin all day long.

"Another advantage is the playground the roof gives the babies while Maggie has to cook or clean the room, or go out to work at the bake-shop on the corner, or run errands for the grocery man at the other corner. But the children so often will hang over the open shafts of the building or run recklessly about while playing with each other, often stumbling over obstruc-

tions and all but hurtling over the very low parapet that runs about the three sides of the roof. The fourth side is not enclosed, as it slopes down at the back and has fire-escapes and piles of debris piled up there.

"Again, on a hot breathless night, it is better to take the mats on the roof and sleep where a slight breeze blows over in the early dawn, than it is to scorch and swelter in the small air-tight room underneath. Even though Jimmy does walk in his sleep, it is better thus, than to have him lie awake all night in the hot room. He has to work all day and needs his rest at night.

"Our Mr. Richards heard this matter-of-fact little girl tell about her family and home and determined to enroll the entire family on the list of Little Citizens with a bid for a summer at Happy Hills in the Valley of Delight.

"Said he as a starter for the news: 'Maggie, have you ever been in the country?'

"Maggie looked mildly scornful, as she said, 'Country! Why, Mister, ain't you crazy?'

"Mr. Richards felt rebuked, but persisted, 'I mean, do you and the children ever have time or money to take an outing, or visit the parks?'

"Maggie again looked patiently bored as she said, 'If it warn't that the lady downstairs promised to give the kids their bread and skim-milk this noon, I wouldn't never have known there war such a wonderful place as this for folks to play on.'

"Mr. Richards felt silenced for a moment. Then he determined to plunge right in the idea he had in mind.

" 'Maggie, how would you like to move your whole family out to the green fields for a summer? You could have a little house all for yourself, where six of the children could sleep and live and you would be the Guide and have the seventh bed to sleep in. You would have to show Jimmy and May how to help you take care of dressing the children and how to wash their faces and brush their hair, and that would be all you would have to do for many fine, grand weeks.'

"Maggie glanced out of the corner of her eye with the natural suspicion of all that class of children showing plainly. 'What are you plannin' to do wid us? Make us sneak-thieves like the man what tried to git Jimmy?'

" 'No, Maggie, I belong to this big company who are going to make everything for poor children very different than it ever was before. A nice old lady has a big, big country park, much bigger than this Bronx, and she is building little houses for all such families as you have, to live in free all summer. We call the houses "Nests" and the children are Little Citizens, but you will see when you get there. I will take you over to meet the Blue Bird girls and the Bobolink boys and the mothers who are working on the ways to make Little Citizens happy, and you will see that I am honest and willing to help you move to Happy Hills.'

" 'Where'd we git the money to move wid?' asked Maggie.

" 'Have you much furniture to move?' asked Mr. Richards, quite sure she had nothing that would not be sent to the rubbish heap if the Board of Health knew the facts.

" 'We got some bed-mats, an' a table that leans agin the wall 'cause two legs air gone, an' some boxes covered wid nice carpet—at least, it was nice long ago when Mrs. Maxon had it. She troo it away and Jimmy fished it outen the ash-

can. Then we got dishes—Oh, we got a blue chiny cup an' a yeller tater dish that is fine! The odders ain't much good, but we kin use 'em all right!'

" 'Well, the best thing would be to sell out your flat to someone cheap, and take the family and move to the country where everything is ready furnished.' Mr. Richards spoke in the way he knew she would understand best.

" 'Show me the ladies you said you knew!' said Maggie, with unexpected caution and wisdom for her years.

"Mr. Richards was deeply impressed and thought to himself that if every child were as precautious and wise as Maggie there would be no crime forced upon little ones, who, in their innocence, were taught to become criminals.

"Maggie was escorted at once to Mrs. Talmage and the other ladies who were in charge of the multitude of Little Citizens, and Maggie felt reassured when she saw the smiles and felt the kind hands that patted her rough shock of red hair.

"The young man who introduced her explained the family history as Maggie knew it,

and the group of ladies seemed ready to cry. Why wondered Maggie. Wasn't she and her other brothers and sisters having the time of their life in this park?

"Then one lady spoke: 'Mr. Richards, something ought to be done at once and not delay this matter until Happy Hills is ready.'

" 'But, my dear Mrs. Talmage, this is only one out of so many cases, and we cannot discriminate. However, I can get in touch with this case and keep you posted, and as soon as Miss Selina has any place ready we can ship them all over to Happy Hills.'

" 'Well, do let us send the invalid to some place where he can have proper treatment until we can move them to the country,' added Mrs. Catlin.

" 'And that gives me another idea, ladies,' suggested Mr. Richards. 'We ought to send out the proper nurses and help to take charge of all of the little ones who were afflicted by the infantile plague last summer. We will doubtless find scores of victims with the other Little Citizens, and they should be given a separate division where they may have especial care.'

"This conversation interested Maggie only so far as it might help Frankie so he would cry less. She turned to watch other children romp and laugh while these Grownups were planning her future.

" 'Ask our Welfare Mother to visit Maggie and see if anything can be done at once to relieve the conditions. Then, we will have them moved at the first opportunity,' said Mrs. Starr.

"So, Maggie's fate was smiled upon and thenceforth she was to know what good friends the Blue Birds and Bobolinks had found for her.

" 'Our Mr. Richards says he has found a purchaser of Maggie's household possessions when she is ready to fly away to the Valley of Delight, but we—old sceptical newspaper men—firmly believe the junkman will move the trash away from the room as soon as Maggie has left. But she must not know this for she firmly believes that her chattels are worth at least two dollars to anybody. And two dollars she will be paid for all the rights in her household goods.' "

Jinks enjoyed this story and the children smiled at the pathos and at the humorous manner in

which it was written. Ned declared that he could detect Mr. Richards' own style in the telling of the story, and the others agreed with him.

After comments had been freely exchanged over the story, Ruth sighed, "Oh, I wish Happy Hills were all ready this minute."

"Well, I guess we all wish that, but it takes time to do so much. I think we ought to mail these stories to Flutey, however, and let her see how urgent is the need for haste," said Mrs. Talmage from the doorway, having entered while Jinks finished reading his story.

That was a good idea, so they found duplicate accounts of the pathetic tales and addressed them to Miss Selina.

Uncle Ben did not come again to Mossy Glen all that week, but he arrived early on Saturday noon. The Blue Birds and Bobolinks were so glad to see him after such a long interval that he laughed as they clung about his arms and coat-tails.

"Why, anyone would think I was a long lost friend!"

"Humph! You're more than that to us—and to our Little Citizens!" cried Ned.

"But tell us, Uncle Ben—where have you been all this week? Mother Wings telephoned your office the other day to tell you how much we needed to see you, and she thought maybe you had over-worked yourself that Easter Monday and needed someone to nurse you," said Ruth.

"Ha, ha! Uncle Ben never gets tired or sick! But now that I am here, I will confess to you all. I ran away!" said he.

The children looked amazed and the Grown-ups smiled.

"Yes, sire-ee! I ran so far away from New York that I forgot there ever was a place where children rented piano-boxes filled with coal to sleep in, or where little girls of ten had to bring up a family of seven on almost nothing. I ran to a lovely green woodland, where a brook filled a shallow lake that almost tempted me to pull off my shoes and stockings and paddle about after a little boat of bark that I sent sailing over the water."

The Blue Birds and Bobolinks were beginning to realize what Uncle Ben meant and where he had been so no one breathed or moved lest he be interrupted in his story.

"I ran all about those woods and laughed with the early robins who were busy pulling fat worms out of the soft earth. I sat and told some things that were bothering me, to some red squirrels who hopped about me in their eagerness to offer all the help they could.

"Then, I ran to the hill where I found a crowd of carpenters sawing and hammering at a long, long building which they told me was to be a refectory.

"After this, I ran to another hill near by, where another long, long building was being erected and the boss of this work told me it was to be a sort of hospital for the sick and cripples. That news almost took the rest of my breath so that I had to sit down before I could run another step."

Uncle Ben waited here and looked about at the smiling eager faces of the group close about him, and he laughed happily as he winked at Mrs. Talmage.

"I'm sure they all know how far I ran?" laughed he.

"Yes, yes—of course we do, but go on and don't sit under that tree so long to get your

breath!" shouted Dot Starr eagerly, making everyone laugh at her words.

"Well, now that I feel rested again, I will run along," replied Uncle Ben.

"While I rested under that tree Dot just mentioned, I saw something that was most interesting to me, so I ran over to a number of little knolls that looked like baby hills cuddling under the other hills where the refectory and infirmary stood. Here I found that each little knoll had a Nest for Little Citizens upon it, while in the little valleys between the knolls stood other Nests of the same size and plan.

"I found the Nests all ready for tenants, excepting the electric wires which had not as yet been installed. But otherwise, a family of seven little children could move in any day, providing they were not too particular about meals and manners.

"I found the water-proof canvas curtains all up and working in fine order, and the bunks and lockers all ready for bedding and clothes. But the mattresses and bed-clothes were all packed in great cases waiting at the barns for the lights to

be finished in each Nest and the occupants' presence to need the beds.

"Next, I spied some fields where things looked as though being laid out for a checker-board. A large building near this vast expanse of meadow and field roused my curiosity and I ran over to ask the farmers what they were doing.

"I was told that they were laying out small section farms for Little Citizens and that the new large building near there was the place in which all tools and seeds were kept, and where the Little Citizens would meet to hear talks on agriculture and where all kinds of modern ideas were pictured or shown by models. In the rooms on the second floor, the farmers and teachers who had charge of this department would lodge.

"By this time, I was so excited that I forgot about my breath and ran quickly over the woodland. After a long run, I came to a nice old-fashioned house where a lady lived, who was doing all of this wonderful plan for Little Citizens.

"When I ran in at the open door I found I knew the lady for she happened to be a friend of some Blue Birds and Bobolinks I knew at Oak-

dale. The lady's right name is Aunt Selina, but we all, as well as the Little Citizens, shall henceforth know her as Flutey, the Mother Wings of Happy Hills in the Valley of Delight.

"I heard that she had received newspaper clippings of an Easter Monday Picnic at a New York Park, and she was so glad and happy at all she knew she could do to help Little Citizens, that she cried about the joy she felt.

"When she told me that some of the children could be brought out to the Nests week after next, I too felt so happy and glad that I sat and cried with her."

As Uncle Ben's voice trembled with deep feeling at the last words, he looked about at the group and found that they all showed suspicious moisture in their eyes.

"Well, well! I do believe we are all a big lot of cry-babies together! Here, Mother Wings, give us each a stick of candy to pacify us!" Uncle Ben spoke in such a cheery tone, at the same time pointing to a large box of bon-bons that stood upon a table near the door, that everyone laughed and tears turned to hopes of what that box held for them.

CHAPTER XIII

HAPPY MAY DAYS

April passed too quickly for the publishing company, for with its passing they realized that the May magazine must be made up and printed Then too, the spring was so inviting, and marbles and hoops were much more entertaining than cases of inky type or the sound of a printing press.

Said Ned to the company one day, "This is just what Uncle Ben meant when he said that if we went into this magazine business we must keep it up in spite of all enticements. So far, we have not cared for other sports as we had winter weather that was not so agreeable and the New York treats made us all feel like lords and ladies. Now that all this is over, and the Little Citizens are on the highroad to going to Happy Hills for the summer, we have to stop and think before we spend the time after school

playing a match game of baseball or going fishing."

The company thought seriously over Ned's statement, then Don Starr demurred.

"That's all right, but you see, a fellow just has to go somewhere or he'll grow to be a back number!"

"You haven't shown any signs of it yet, and we have been sticking pretty close to our business since last fall," argued his older brother Mete.

"Nothing else to do, as Ned said, but now that things in the village and all over, are livening up a bit, I can't sit down in a barn and vegetate!" declared Don, defiantly, for he had gone fishing with his chums last Saturday and he preferred fun to the humdrum things to be done for a May issue of the magazine.

"I wish Uncle Ben could hear you say that!" declared Dot.

"Who wants Uncle Ben? Here he is just when he's needed!" cried a cheery voice at the door of the barn.

"Why, Don Starr is calling our offices a plain old barn, now, but he used to quarrel with any-

one who called it that this winter," complained Dot.

"And he just said that he'd rather go fishing than make up a magazine!" added Ruth.

Don seemed crestfallen the moment he found that Uncle Ben was at hand, but he made no protest.

"Ha! I know what ails Don! He has the hookworm! I know lots of boys—and men too —who get the hookworm in the spring of the year when frogs croak for us to come and swim, and nice plump trout flash through the water, whisking their tails at us, who sit on the bank and wish we had a rod and line," said Uncle Ben, sympathetically.

"Oh, Uncle Ben, you are so silly! That isn't what a hookworm means, at all!" laughed Ned, who had read all about the queer malady that affected folks living in very warm climates.

"No? What would you say it was, then?" replied Uncle Ben.

Before Ned could answer, however, Ike came to the barn and said, "He's on the wire now, Mr. Talmage."

So Uncle Ben ran quickly out of the publish-

ing house and into the garage where he remained to telephone for a long time. When he finally returned to the office, he found the children still in a state of dissatisfaction over their magazine work.

"Well, that was a specialist I was talking to over the telephone. He thinks just as I do, that the hookworm is a state of mind that is hard to dose. It comes from too much human interest in a work and when the interest or excitement lets up a bit, the victim gets the hookworm of ennui. Then is the time to apply drastic measures, so he advised me what to do for this assemblage. Now, am I to be permitted to prescribe for you or will you go on entertaining the hookworm until the magazine dies a natural death for lack of interest of the publishers?"

"Oh, Uncle Ben, such a thing will never happen!" cried Ruth, shocked.

"Yes, it will! If this hookworm isn't removed right now, when its first symptoms are appearing in Don's attitude, it will soon spread among the others and by the first of July there will be no more printing and no more interest in this grand work," said Uncle Ben sadly.

Everyone felt guilty, for had not each one felt how much nicer it would be to play out of doors than to sit in a barn?

"All right, then, I'll prescribe," said Uncle Ben a few moments after he had spoken, although no one had made any reply to his previous statement.

"To-morrow morning, at five o'clock—if the day is fine—every member of this company must be at this office! It needs early rising on a clear morning to effectually dose the hookworm."

Now, the Blue Birds and Bobolinks knew that Uncle Ben was serious in some respects, and that he was joking in others. But they could not determine when he was in earnest or when he was in fun over this affair, so they all promised him to be at the barn at five in the morning, having had an early breakfast at home.

And, at five, on the glorious May day morning, all of the young publishers met at the barn where Uncle Ben had not yet appeared.

They had not long to wait, however, for even while they were laughing over the idea of curing the Blue Birds and Bobolinks of a hookworm that each one was sure was only a "make-

believe ill," a shout was heard out on the road in front of the barn, and there sat Uncle Ben at the wheel of the Talmage car while Jim steered the Starr's car.

"Are we going for a ride?" cried Dot, eagerly.

"We're all going to get the doctor first, and then take you to a country hospital where you will be cured. If the severe treatment given you to-day does not cure you entirely of the lazy disease, then there is no hope, for the hookworm will have made his control too great for anything to help you get over it!" sighed Uncle Ben, rolling his eyes skyward with a funny expression.

"Who's your doctor?" called Don, as he climbed in the Starr's automobile.

"One from the city. You'll soon see. I telephoned him last night when I was called from your offices, and he agreed to be out from the city on the very first train to arrive here this morning. We are now going to the station to get him."

The children did not know just what to make of Uncle Ben's queer idea, but waited patiently for results.

The train had not yet come in but was due, so they waited in the parking section in front of the depot and soon heard a shrill whistle which announced the incoming mail train.

Of course every neck was craned to catch a glimpse of the doctor, but no professional-looking man with a bag alighted. Instead, a young man with a broad smile ran over and greeted the publishers.

"Well, well! Here you are—every one of you! Did you manage to get up before breakfast or did you refuse to go to bed?" asked Mr. Richards, smiling at each and all of them.

"I wish to introduce my own specialist, friends, so, if any of you have met him before this as a newspaper man, you will now find out that he is a very renowned specialist for the hookworm!" declared Uncle Ben, with a very serious voice and face.

Mr. Richards laughed for he hadn't the faintest idea of the trouble that had come up in the publishing company the day before.

"Where's his hospital you told us of?" jeered Don, thinking it was all a great joke played upon them.

"And may we go back to bed when we get home?" added Ned.

"I see very plainly that you believe this all a joke—well, now just wait and see if we don't give you something to-day that will kill every thought of laziness where the magazine is concerned!" said Uncle Ben, emphatically.

Then he turned to Mr. Richards and explained the trouble and the cure he advocated. As he spoke he steered the automobile down the hill that led away from Oakdale and the children wondered if he knew what he was doing. But Mr. Richards seemed to think it was all right, so they said nothing about going home again.

Soon after this explanation Mr. Richards mentioned a very interesting idea which absorbed the Blue Birds' attention so much that they failed to notice on which road Uncle Ben drove them.

"Yesterday, a rich lady came down to my office to see me about this big summer plan, and she said she expected to donate a yearly sum of money to insure its success—not only for Happy Hills and the City of New York, but so that every city could have and maintain a

big summer camp just like the one we constructed.

"Then she gave me a suggestion that sounds very good to me. She offered to pay for the items needed to try out the plan, and she also mentioned the names of some prominent banks that she would see and request that they act as treasurers for the funds collected until we would need them.

"Her plan is simply this: To place a solid, strong barrel in the main-hall of every public school with its name on the front—'Little Citizens' Contribution Barrel'—and into this barrel which has an opening in the lid on top, packages can be dropped by anyone at any time while passing by.

"Toys, tools, clothing, fruit, candy, cakes, and whatnot can be deposited into these barrels, and whatever is needed by the Country Nests to insure success for their work, to be first sent to them. What is not needed by the Nests, can be distributed about the city, taking the city in sections so that all parts will be covered regularly. The Welfare Organization will look after the distribution end of it.

"These barrels, well-built and safe-guarded with a padlock and chain to prevent sneak-thieves from entering the school with the intention of stealing the barrel or contents, will be ordered and paid for by the lady.

"Then, she thought of placing a little barrel made something like a bank, but in the shape of a barrel, in every public building, large office buildings, in hotels, in subways and other railway stations, and in clubs, schools, Y. M. C. A.'s and Y. W. C. A.'s, and any other places where we think we can collect any money. These barrels will be inspected periodically and the money taken therefrom by a trusty collector belonging to the Little Citizens' League. Now, what do you think of it all?"

When Mr. Richards had finished speaking, Uncle Ben looked straight ahead of the car as if he were seeing something far down the roadway. But he said nothing.

"I think she is a lovely lady!" declared Dot.

"And it is a bee-autiful idea!" added Betty.

"But it will take a lot of folks to work it out right!" commented careful Ruth.

"Yes, that is true!" added Mr. Richards. "What have you to say about it, Uncle Ben?"

"I am not quite prepared to give judgment yet, but on the spur of the moment I would say, let us go slow and sure! I haven't a doubt but that the idea is fine, and will interest a great mass of individuals, but it is just a bit aside from this first year's experiment. We don't need a lot of money or old clothes just now. We couldn't use a million dollars just now to start new farms even if we had the money donated to-day, for it takes time and much thought to start a farm of Nests in the proper place and under the right management. It would be a physical impossibility to do more than we have already done for this season. I am loath to let this whole plan slip out of my control by accepting too many ideas of strangers, for it is the individual who handles a plan that makes himself felt all through the work.

"Then, too, it has never been my idea to keep on giving the Little Citizens something for nothing. I have always believed it the highest form of charity if you made someone self-supporting. So, each Little Citizen at Happy Hills has to

work his farm, you know, to raise flowers or vegetables for use or for sale. I have some ideas to try out this winter for city work that I think is much better than this lady's idea, but I do not wish to mention the future until we see if Happy Hills will prove the help and success we hope for it."

Of course everyone knew Uncle Ben was right, for he was the real father of the whole wonderful plan. So Mr. Richards admitted the fact.

They had been driving very fast during this conversation and the Blue Birds wondered where Uncle Ben was taking them. Finally Dot Starr said, "Aren't we almost near that hospital?"

"No, we have about two hours' more ride, I think," said Uncle Ben.

"Hours! Gracious, where is it anyway?" asked Dot.

"Away off in the woods where other people can't hear the lazy patient yell and scream when the doctor starts to kill the hookworm," said Uncle Ben, seriously, then laughing heartily when he caught sight of Dot's face.

At his laugh the Blue Birds knew he was fool-

ing and that this was really going to be a treat for them.

As they passed through the next small village on the road, Ruth seemed to notice familiar things about the place. Then, when they passed a lovely estate where marble statues stood here and there on the smooth lawn, she recognized the way.

"Oh, oh, oh! He's going to Happy Hills! Oh, oh!" and she jumped up and tried to hug her uncle rapturously.

But he laughed and cried, "Wait, wait! You'll run the car into a tree!"

Then Dot Starr had to jump up on the seat and lean far out over the back and scream to the boys in the car behind, "He's taking us to Happy Hills—Happy Hills!"

But the whirr of the cars made her voice sound queer and all the boys could understand was that they were going to somewhere on a hill.

Even the boys became suspicious, however, after they had been travelling for miles and miles and still the leading car showed no signs of turning in at a house or stopping to ask the way. They also found out that they were in

Pennsylvania, and that was clue enough to tell them their destination.

"Well, we'll soon be there now, Blue Birds!" announced Uncle Ben after they had been travelling for hours and were growing restless.

And when they caught sight of the Nests at Happy Hills, in the Valley of Delight, they were so pleased that they forgot all about their weariness and the hookworm complaint.

They stopped at the house where Aunt Selina was overjoyed to see them again, and everyone had to be hugged and kissed in welcome at her home.

"Oh, Flutey! You look so fine and young I would never have known you again!" cried Ruth, while all the other children agreed with her.

"Why, dearies, one just can't help feeling young when so many bright children are about to keep everything youthful!" laughed Aunt Selina.

"Well, we need a dose of that same medicine, Flutey! My Publishing Company has been ailing recently and I began to notice symptoms of a boycott, so I arrested them all and brought them over here to see what has resulted from the little

work they actually did, and then let them stop to consider what would have been the result had each one of them said, "Ah! I don't want to print anything, or bother with a club for Little Citizens!"

"And we also want to get the encouragement that comes from seeing results like this, which will make us feel like going at the job, hammer and tongs, when we get back home!" added Mr. Richards.

So, Flutey got into the car with Uncle Ben, and soon they were over at the Valley of Delight.

It was still too early in the season to have many Little Citizens in the country, for it was but May; yet, some of the Nests were occupied and the aspect of the entire place was beginning to assume an air of life and bustle.

To the great delight of the Blue Birds and Bobolinks, Maggie Owens and her family were safely sheltered in a Nest near the main path. The different paths that divided the groups of Nests were called by pretty floral names, such as Daisy Path, Buttercup Path, Marigold Path, etc.

Although the Owens family had not been at Happy Hills more than ten days they were showing the good of fresh air and simple childlike life. Jimmy helped the farmers and earned his wages as well as they did. Maggie helped the cook at the refectory and also earned her wages.

But the Publishing Company had the greatest surprise when Aunt Selina asked Uncle Ben to lift the little girl, May Owens, upon the running board of one of the cars. She was then requested to sing for the visitors.

May was not in the least self-conscious, for her newspaper business had made her quite self-reliant, so she smiled and scuffled her foot for a moment while she decided what to sing.

"Sing the 'aria from Rusticana,' dearie!" suggested Aunt Selina.

And to the great amazement of everyone who heard her for the first time, the child sang with a wonderful voice the song she had heard ground out of hand-organs on the street or learned in snatches from the little Italians about her. She could not have told you, to save her life, what the words were that she sang, and some of the accent was all wrong, but Aunt Selina only wanted to

show what possibilities were dormant in some of these Little Citizens.

"Now sing that 'March, March, March, song you like so much,' said Flutey.

And May sang the song with a spirit and zeal that made the boys beat time unconsciously. This she had learned from Maggie and Jimmy upon their return home from the Easter Monday Picnic at Bronx Park.

"Aunt Selina, she ought to be trained," whispered Uncle Ben.

"I know it, and I am going to write to my dear old Rebecca's daughter who has a studio in New York. I shall invite her out here for a few days and let her discover this little star," said Aunt Selina joyously, as she patted May on the head and thanked her.

"Why, do you know, this incident reminds me of a story we had in the papers a long time ago about Pauline Lucca," said Mr. Richards in a low tone to Aunt Selina and the Blue Birds.

"When Pauline was a child she was so homely and stupid that her schoolmates avoided her and the teachers never took any notice of her.

"The school had singing lessons once a week,

but they were charged extra to each child, and Pauline was so poor that her mother could not pay the small fee, so she was not permitted to join the class. She was placed in the back seat of the singing class, however, as she could not be left all alone in the class-room. Then, the singing master allowed her to hold an old book while the others sang.

"When the final day of school came and all the parents and friends were present to hear the scholars recite, Pauline was there dressed in a queer robe made of an old muslin window curtain.

"She was given a seat on the last bench and when her name was called for examination she stood up and promptly failed to spell the word correctly. Everyone laughed and she sat down and cried.

"Then came the test in singing and Pauline stood up with the others but not having been a pupil, she was ordered to sit down again.

"She shed bitter tears during the time that each child sang a song. But the kind old teacher saw her pleading face and went over to her. When all had finished singing he led the poor

little girl out and asked that she be permitted to sing her little song, whether she had taken lessons or not. She would be made happy, and that was the important thing after all.

"So Pauline sang and when she had finished there was such a silence that the little girl felt she had done something awful. But the kind teacher begged her to sing another song, and, once started, Pauline forgot where she was and sang and sang.

"Now, it happened that a celebrated singer was in the room and he recognized a wonderful voice in the singer. He sent the little girl to a noted teacher, and stupid homely Pauline was transformed into the lovely, famous, grand opera singer."

"Oh, Mr. Richards, wouldn't it be wonderful if our little May became famous?" cried Ruth, clasping her hands.

"And that crippled little brother of hers! You ought to see the wonderful pictures he makes with charcoal! It is all he ever had to do at home, and charcoal was the only thing he had to work with, for they used it in the stove.

I really believe he will prove to be a genius!" declared Aunt Selina.

"Well, this alone ought to kill every symptom of hookworm, Uncle Ben," laughed Ned.

"Yes, indeed! If your Little Citizens show such marvelous gifts which would have been hidden or killed for lack of nourishment, just think of the joy you all ought to feel when you remember that your Publishing Company and the magazine did it!" said Mr. Richards, emphatically.

The rest of the time was spent in delightful visits to the little farms, the Nests, the other buildings, and then to a big feast prepared at the house for the visitors.

On the ride home that night Don admitted, "I feel as if that hookworm had turned into dozens of busy bees all buzzing to get at work!"

The others laughed at his funny speech, but Uncle Ben felt that the calamity of a loss of interest in the work was overcome for that time, at least.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FUNNY NUMBER

Uncle Ben did not bring his party home until long after ten o'clock that night, and most of them were half asleep when they were helped from the automobiles at their respective homes.

But the plan had the desired effect for not one of the Blue Birds or Bobolinks would have dared shirk the important work of getting out the magazine—the only method they had at that time of interesting the public in their benevolent plans or of securing co-operation with other societies for helping needy children.

As a direct result of being out so late at night, not one of the publishers felt like getting up and attending school the following morning, so Uncle Ben decided to remain over that day and have a talk with the children to establish them in their renewed zeal for Little Citizens.

Near noon one after the other, the Blue

Birds and Bobolinks arrived at the barn, and Uncle Ben came in as he saw the Starr twins—always the last at work—stroll in at the open door of the offices.

"Well, where are the hookworms, to-day?" laughed Uncle Ben.

"Gone for keeps!" responded Ned, smilingly.

"That's right! Now, how about the next issue of the magazine? Got any copy ready, or have any of you made plans for it?" continued Uncle Ben.

"No, that's just the trouble! We seem all used up for original ideas," complained Jinks.

"Oh, impossible! What with so many bright heads all about, would you want me to believe that you can't find the things to fill the pages of that paper?" said Uncle Ben, quizzically.

"Nevertheless, it's true! We used up every little scrap of information in the other numbers and now we're stumped!" declared Mete.

"Well, then we'll have to pattern after some of our big successful periodicals in New York. Now, let me see! They have a New Year's Number, a Valentine Number, a Windy Number, an Easter Number—all of which we seem to have

had also. Now, suppose we try a Funny Number and fill the magazine with funny stories and sayings?" suggested Uncle Ben.

"Goodness me! That will be harder than anything else!" cried Ned.

"Why, we couldn't get enough jokes or funny stories to fill one page, let alone the whole magazine!" added Jinks.

"Well, you'll only have to fill one page at a time, you know. If you begin at the first page, and have enough stuff left over for the second page, you will be that much more through the entire book, won't you? Suppose you try and fill one page?" advised Uncle Ben.

"Where under the sun will we get the fun to fill that one?" grumbled Don.

"See here! It's lunch hour. Suppose I offer a prize to the member of this company who brings in the most funny sayings or anecdotes that he can get together before five o'clock tonight—here at the office!" said Uncle Ben.

"Oh that will be easy enough for we can get a book of jokes and write down dozens of them," said Ruth.

"Oh, no, not that way. I mean for you to get

original funny sketches and something pertaining to children. Not just humorous things of grown-ups. I know you can get them and so I want each of you to try," explained Uncle Ben.

"But where shall we try?" persisted Don.

"Anywhere. Get on your pony and ride out to a farm and ask the owner if he ever had anything funny happen to his pigs, or his dog, or his crops! One of the girls could stop at the baker's and ask if they ever had anything funny happen to their dough or their business? Why, there are a hundred ways of winning that prize!" enthused Uncle Ben.

"That's great! I never thought of such a thing!" exclaimed Don, smiling, as he planned a way of action.

"Of course you didn't! That's what ails all of you! It isn't that there isn't an original idea to be had but every one of you has stopped thinking!" replied Uncle Ben.

"Agreed, Uncle Ben. If anyone brings in the most funny things that can be printed in the magazine he will get a prize, and if we find enough to fill several pages we will call it the Funny Number," declared Ned.

"Then I'm off to start hunting!" said Uncle Ben, waving his hand and leaving the offices.

"You know, Uncle Ben always makes everything seem so easy, doesn't he?" ventured Mete, as they all got up from the benches, ready to go home to luncheon.

"Yes, but this isn't so easy! How would you start to get a funny story?" asked Ruth.

"Why, I've got one story already. I thought of it just after Uncle Ben spoke of Don's going off to hunt them up," replied Mete.

"What is it—tell it to us!" chorused a babel of voices.

"Well, remember it is mine! Nobody must use the idea!" said Mete, cautiously.

As every head nodded in promise of faith with him, he said, "Just a few weeks ago Don had to take some medicine, but as he hates it, he shook his head.

"Then Mumzie said, 'Come, Don—it's sweet as sugar!'

"And Don said, 'I hate to be selfish, Mumzie, so I'll give it to Babs instead!' "

Everyone laughed for it was really very funny and Don looked chagrined to find that he had

been the victim of that bitter dose and had now lost the compensation for having taken it, in forgetting to remember it at this time.

"Oh, do you know, I believe we can find heaps of funny things like that. Why, Babs said an awful funny thing the other night when Mumzie was reading us a Bible story," cried Dot, quite excited at the light Mete threw upon the problem.

"Tell us what it was?" said most of the children.

"Now, Don you were there so don't you choose this one," warned Dot, scowling at her twin.

"No, no; whoever tells a story here must be the rightful author of it to count on the prizes," declared Ned.

So Dot said the Bible story had been the reading of how Pharaoh's daughter found Moses in the bulrushes. They all listened eagerly, and when Mumzie reached the place where the maids were ordered to carry Moses up to the palace, Babs cried: "Mumzie dear, why did dose bulls rush atter Moses?"

The Blue Birds and Bobolinks laughed merrily at this, and the two funny stories had the effect of sending each one off with the desire to find

more, for now it seemed a very simple thing to do.

Ruth ran home as fast as she could to tell Mother Wings about Uncle Ben's idea, and in the library she found Mrs. Catlin who was invited to luncheon that day.

"Oh, you're just the one to tell me some funny things that happened when you were a little girl!" cried Ruth, as she hastily explained about the Funny Number.

The ladies looked at each other and laughed, Mrs. Talmage adding, "Did you ever see anybody like Ben? I declare, he has a remedy for every ill—real or fancied!"

"Well, it is a good thing for the Little Citizens that he can. Yesterday he cured the 'hookworm' and to-day he starts a Funny Number!" added Mrs. Catlin.

"Yes, yes, but do help me! I want to win a prize!" exclaimed Ruth impatiently.

"Well, let me tell you what to do, then. After Mother Wings and I have told you any we can think of at the moment, you just run down to the school-teacher and see if she hasn't a store of incidents that happen in school. Or, go to the

rectory and ask our rector if he knows of any funny things that are reported from the Sunday-school teachers," advised Mrs. Catlin.

"Oh, yes, that is fine! But someone else may think of that too, and get there first!" wailed Ruth.

"If you will eat your luncheon with us, I will ask Ike to drive you to your different destinations in the car. That will save time in walking so far," added Mrs. Talmage, who feared Ruth would refuse to eat if she felt so anxious to get away.

That was satisfactorily arranged, and Mrs. Catlin and her mother promised Ruth to write down the funny things they remembered to have happened to them when children.

Ruth decided to visit the rectory first for she feared she would be detained at school for the afternoon if she happened to appear during the session. At the dear old rector's she heard some stories just as funny as the one Dot told about Moses.

The moment the rector heard why Ruth sought for funny stories he smiled and said, "Yes, I have quite a few I can tell you, but first, you must

have a pencil and some paper to write them down."

This ready, the rector folded his hands and began.

"The first one is about a little boy in the infant class who sat listening to the teacher describing the colored picture of Elijah ascending to heaven in the chariot drawn by wonderful steeds. As the children are permitted to raise their hands to ask any questions, Ralphie raised his hand and said, 'Teacher, do you s'pose dat angel let Elijah sit in front and drive some of the way?' "

Ruth laughed so merrily over this that she had to stop writing, and when she resumed her writing the rector was engaged thinking up another story for her.

"When I was a young man and had been given a church at a fashionable summer resort, to see how I would conduct services in a social community, I overheard a little girl speak to an usher, and what she said has never been forgotten by me.

"The service reached the place where the ushers take up the collection. As there was no especial charity to be benefited by the collection

that day, I was not expected to mention the act.

"Right before me, a few pews from the front, sat a pretty little girl dressed in very fine clothes. Beside her sat a fashionably-gowned mother. As the plate passed those in front they placed crisp bills on it, and then it was handed to the little girl before it reached her mother. But the lady already had her daintily gloved hand out to take it when her tiny daughter cried, 'Oh, mama! we don't need this money! You mustn't take what doesn't belong to you!' Then the little miss turned to the smiling usher and said, 'No, thank you—take it away!' "

Ruth laughed but did not think this one so funny for she said, "I feel so sorry for the little girl! She didn't know any better, I s'pose!"

"Well, Ruth, maybe you will like this one better. I did not hear it myself but a friend of mine told it as a fact. A little boy went to church with his mother and when the plate was passed around he noticed that she placed a nickel on it. On the walk home after service, his mother was telling a neighbor how very poor she thought the sermon was. And her son rebuked her by saying,

'Well, mama, you only paid a nickel for it—what can anyone expect for five cents!'"

"Oh, Mr. Rankin, nobody would say that, would they?" said Ruth, quite horrified.

"If you mean the complaints about our sermons—I should say, yes, my child. A minister can never please all of his hearers, no matter how hard he tries, for someone always thinks it is the poorest preaching they ever heard!" returned the rector, sadly.

"Well, remember a more cheerful story then, and let's forget the people who find fault," advised Ruth.

While she sat with the tip of the pencil in her mouth waiting to jot down another story, the rector looked at the ceiling to recall some more stories.

Suddenly he laughed aloud and said, "Here's one that I overheard at an Anniversary Meeting of the Sunday School. A well-known missionary from India was to be present to address the children, and so a Sunday School our church was maintaining in the slums was invited to be present at the meeting.

"The missionary stood in the vestibule with

me for a few moments before entering the church, and as we stood there watching the scholars go by, one bright little girl passed and smiled up at me. I was not sure that I knew who she was, but I smiled back.

"The missionary thought it was a little friend of mine and he placed his hand upon her short curls and asked, 'And what might your age be, my dear?'

" 'Well, sir, it *might* be sixty, but it ain't!' "

"That's funny, but I think it was very rude to your kind missionary," ventured Ruth.

At this moment Ruth heard Jinks' voice in the hallway. He was ushered into the room where she sat with the rector, and when Jinks saw her he gasped. "Who told you to come?" asked he.

But Ruth knew that the Bobolinks would do their best to win the prize and she wanted the Blue Birds to win, so she did some very rapid thinking. The result of it was that she said, "Did you come straight here from your luncheon?"

"Yes, but what has that to do with my question?" said Jinks.

Ruth made no reply, but ran over to the as-

tonished rector and whispered, "Save the other stories until I come back—I asked first, you know!" and then ran out of the house.

She jumped into the car and told Ike to race for the schoolhouse, as it was three o'clock.

Jinks turned to the rector and explained about his call, but the dear old man shook his head and said, "I have already told my stories to Ruthie."

As the Talmage automobile stopped in front of the school Ruth told Ike to drive around the corner and wait for her, as she feared one of the Bobolinks might see the car and suspect her of the plot to get the stories.

In a few words the little Blue Bird told her favorite teacher what she wanted and the teacher laughingly led her to the principal. Here she was reminded that she had been absent that day and did not deserve any help in winning the prize. But Ruth knew the twinkle in the eyes that tried to look severe meant that she would soon have some more stories.

As soon as the teacher left the office the principal took a scrap book from a closet and turned over the leaves slowly.

"Now, my dear, if I read you some of these stories, promise me you won't tell the others, for

I can't be bothered by all of the boys and girls who may want funny stories."

"Oh, you see I will have them, so there won't be any need for the others to call," replied Ruth, getting her pencil and pad ready for writing.

So the good-natured principal began.

"A boy was asked a question in geography class which he could not answer and his teacher said that everyone who knew anything could tell that Russia had no oceans at all—it was an inland country.

"The boy then asked innocently, 'Maybe you can tell me why the Russian nation does resemble the sea, then?'

"But the teacher thought and thought and could not.

"Then the boy said, 'Most everyone knows that Russia's nobles are all swells and her people serfs.' "

Ruth giggled as she wrote rapidly and the principal cleared his throat for the next story.

"One day in a class the teacher asked a boy the longest word in the English language.

"He could not tell, but his chum said he could, so he was given the opportunity to tell.

" 'It's smiles—'cause there's a mile between the first and last letters.' "

"O-oh, that's a good one, isn't it? Almost good enough to send to a puzzle man in New York!" laughed Ruth.

The principal chuckled, too, and then said, "I can tell you something that just occurred in Don Starr's class. I was talking to the boys the other day and mentioned the war in Europe. To make myself understood I wished to describe some places in France, so I asked how many boys had been abroad.

"One boy from Sicily stood up, for he had come over from Europe. Another one had been in England and France with his parents. Then Tuck Stevens stood up, but I was quite sure he had not been abroad. 'When did you go to Europe, Tuck?' I asked.

" 'Why, one day Ma and me sailed from New York to Boston,' he replied."

Ruth thought Tuck's story the funniest yet, and she said, "I wish we had more of that kind."

"Well, I can tell you of an incident that happened to me when I was a small boy, but it isn't a school-story. I shall never forget it because I felt so sorry for the poor little boat, and was

horrified at the heartless way all of my relatives laughed at what I felt so grieved over."

Ruth looked expectantly at the school-master and he said, smilingly, "I was about four or five years of age.

"My parents were taking me to the city to watch a great civic parade, and as you know, we had to cross the ferry in boats at that time. This sail was always a great treat to me and I insisted upon looking from the windows in winter-time or standing as near the guard chains as possible in summer.

"This particular spring day I was out in front, and suddenly I saw the sight that wrung my heart. Naturally I called to my father:

" 'Oh, Daddy, see that horrid big ship! He's got that little boat by the tail and is pulling it so hard it has to squeal.'

"After the laugh subsided my mother tried to explain that the little tug was used to pull the great ocean liner out of the slip, but I refused to be comforted."

"Oh, oh, oh!" laughed Ruth, bending over in her merriment. "I do wish you would remember some more of your own funny stories; they are so very funny!"

The man smiled indulgently at Ruth's words of appreciation and continued for her benefit.

"This story has been told about me so many times that I fear it is true, but I do not remember it at all, for I suppose I was too young.

"My grandfather, who often came to visit us, had a long white beard that reached from ear to ear and covered his lower face. Then came the time when men preferred to be clean shaven for more than one good reason, and my grandfather had his beard shaved off.

"The following Sunday he came to dinner at our house, and I failed to recognise him when he came in at the front door.

" 'Why, Jamie, don't you know I am your grandfather?' asked the old man when I refused to speak to him.

"That voice was my grandfather's, I knew, so I looked at the familiar twinkle of the eyes and replied, 'Well, maybe oo is my drand fadder all wight, but whose head did oo get on?' "

At this Ruth laughed again, and added, "I am sure I shall get the prize!"

Just as she spoke, a knock at the office door came and a teacher ushered in Dot, who also had thought of school-stories.

"Oh, you're too late; I've got them all!" cried Ruth, waving her paper.

"No, you didn't, neither, 'cause my teacher told me some!"

"Well, anyway, we got ahead of the Bobolinks!" laughed Ruth, and she told Dot how Jinks came to the rectory after she had had the stories.

"And I went to our dressmaker, as Mumzie advised, for she goes about to so many families where there are children to sew for, that she had heaps of funny things to tell me."

"Oh, really! Do tell us some!" cried Ruth, eagerly.

"Well, children, I guess I have told all you need just now, so you run along and I will continue with my work," said the principal, kindly.

Ruth thanked him very politely for his time and interest, and the two Blue Birds ran out to the corner where Ike waited with the car.

"Did you see any of the boys about?" asked Ruth, curiously.

"Yes, Master Ned and Mete just went in at the back door!" laughed Ike, who had not been seen by the boys.

"Oh, I do hope they won't get any help!" sighed Ruth.

"Here's the ones I got, Ruth, listen!" said Dot, as Ike started away. "From my teacher I got this one:

"She told a little boy in her class last year that the earth was round. The next day she was hearing the geography class and she turned to George and said, 'What shape did I say the earth was?'

" 'I dun'no,' replied George.

" 'Why, I told you yesterday that it was round. Have you forgotten so soon?'

" 'No'm,' said George, 'but my mother says not to believe everything I hear, so I didn't.' "

Ruth laughed and Dot turned to the next one given by her teacher at school.

"Johnny was very stupid and his father told him he had to do better or be punished. One day, when there was a dreadful blizzard, only a few scholars appeared at school. That night Johnny said he was doing fine in class.

" 'I am very glad to hear it, my boy. Did you stand at the head of your recitation class?' asked his father.

" 'No, sir, but I was next to him,' said Johnny.

" 'Fine, Johnny! How many boys were in the class?'

" 'Only two, sir,' replied Johnny seriously."

Both little girls thought that was very funny, and Ike turned to say that he thought it was a good one, too. Then he said, "Maybe the boys haven't thought of the police station. They always have funny things that children do and say on the records."

"Oh, yes, let's try there!" cried Ruth.

While Ike drove down Main Street, Dot told the third and last school story she had.

"One of the boys in class was very witty but not interested in education, so his father always questioned him as to his advancement at school. One day he said, 'Well, Jim, how do you stand at school now—at the head or at the foot?'

" 'Why, Pa, I stand on my two feet, but Billy Summers can stand on his head,' replied Jim, instantly."

By this time the automobile had reached the small station-house of Oakdale where very few arrests were ever made, and the Blue Birds skipped in to greet the sergeant who was a jolly friend of all the children in the town.

"Oh, Mr. Halsey, we need funny stories for our next magazine, and we want you to tell us if you have any on your books?" cried Dot, the

moment she found he was alone and at leisure to talk with them.

"Oh, are you the little girls who telephoned a short time ago about some stories?" asked Mr. Halsey.

Ruth and Dot exchanged glances and Dot said, "We all belong to the same club of Blue Birds and we want to beat the Bobolink boys in this race that Uncle Ben got up for us."

The officer smiled and pulled his spectacles down from his forehead and looked over a book he had been reading when the little girls were ushered into his private room.

"Well, children, here's one of a little boy we had lots of trouble with last year. I made up my mind I must do what his father would have done had he lived, so I said, 'See here, young man! You've been a very bad boy again, and I'm going to give you a choice of two punishments. A sound whipping or to be locked up in the cellar!'

"The boy looked at my muscles and size and asked, 'Who's going to whip me, you or that little policeman?'

"When I told him that I would, he replied, 'Then I'll take a chance on the cellar.'"

Dot giggled while Ruth hurriedly wrote down the story, and the sergeant turned over the pages of his book, smilingly.

"When I was a young man I was a policeman in the city, and I remember arresting a little vagrant boy who said he had no parents or home. I saw what tattered shoes he had on, so I said, 'Are those your best shoes?'

"The little fellow looked down at the shoes for a moment and then said, 'These ain't mine, mister. I found these in a garbage barrel—'cause my best shoes were all worn out.' "

The sergeant chuckled as he gazed at the ceiling in remembrance of his young days, and the Blue Birds said, "Oh, that was a truly Little Citizens' story—can't you tell us more like that one?"

"Well, how will this one do?" quizzed the good-natured man. "I was walking down a friend's beat one morning while he was on duty elsewhere. Two little girls had been playing on the walk when one of them cried, 'He is not, neither!'

" 'Yes, he is—you said so yourself!'

" 'I didn't! Here comes a policeman an' I'm going to ask him,' cried the other small girl.

"They both stopped me and one asked, 'Will they send my papa to prison?'

"And the other interrupted by exclaiming, 'They will, won't they, if he steals?'

"I was sorry to tell the anxious little maid that they would. But I asked, 'What is the matter with your father?'

" 'Why, Ethel wanted to know what business my father was in, an' I told her he was in steel; then she said he was a thief!'

"It took some time to explain to the other little girl that there were two kinds of steel."

"That's a good one, but it isn't quite as Blue Birdy as the other, is it?" said Ruth, trying to be polite.

"No, but we can't always choose just what we want," laughed the sergeant.

"Well, I guess any kind will do to get the prize as long as we get back to the office on time," said Dot, who felt anxious about the time.

"Well, here's one in the book that may do for you. The year Oakdale had the city children out in that large farm some miles from here, when the smallpox became an epidemic in the city, one farmer offered to help by camping some boys in his woods for a time. We sent him a group

of boys from five to ten years of age. Then, in a week's time, we got a letter from him:

" 'Dear Sergeant,' he wrote. 'Come quick and take away these boys and give me the smallpox instead—it will be preferable.' "

The little girls laughed at that, and the sergeant was called out to the waiting room to interview a man, so the Blue Birds shook hands and left him.

At the office of the Publishing Company, at the time Uncle Ben mentioned, everyone took a seat and waited.

It was very entertaining to hear the stories told by the workers, and every one of them had been collected that afternoon. It turned out that more than enough material was on hand for a Funny Number, and Uncle Ben smiled complacently as he said, "I knew it would be easy work. And this will be a number which will always be kept to make folks with the blues smile again."

CHAPTER XV

THE BUSY MONTH OF JUNE

The Funny Number was mailed and was pronounced a very excellent idea for all of the jokes and funny stories were good and original. The Blue Birds won the prize for collecting the best stories, and Ruth won the prize for having the greatest number by the specified time.

At that meeting Uncle Ben said, "I find Ruth is the one who has the greatest number of stories and articles which can be used for our Funny Number. Don Starr had as many in number, but on account of the style and type of some of the stories they had to be omitted. Now, Ruth, I shall present you with the prize next week when I come from the city. As the Blue Birds won the prize for having the best class of stories, they shall also have a prize for the entire club to use."

The Bobolinks felt disappointed, of course, but they were generous enough to clap their hands in applause of the little girls, who smiled with such pleasure at winning the prize.

At the meeting the following week when Uncle Ben brought in the packages that held the prizes, everyone was curious to see what they would be. Mother Wings and some of the Grown-ups were present when Uncle Ben made his little presentation speech.

Ruth found her gift was a lovely leather-bound copy of "Roget's Thesaurus," a book which has always been known as the best one ever published to give complete lists of synonyms and antonyms, and just the thing a school-girl would cherish for her guide in finding the right word or phrase in lessons or composition. Uncle Ben said, as he gave it to Ruth, "It may seem to the little ones that this gift is much too old for the age of the prize-winner, but I believe in giving something that will help one in their present as well as future work. As Ruth takes such an interest in the magazine, she must be provided with a book that will help her select just the word she wants to use in her writing or speaking. And she will never outgrow it, for I use mine to-day as much as I ever did."

Ruth was pleased with the gift, for she was a studious girl by nature, and a game or toy would

not have appealed to her nearly as much as the valuable volume given her.

Then the prize for the Blue Birds was opened, while everyone crowded about the table to see what the heavy thing could be.

When the lid of the box was pried off the Blue Birds gasped, for there was a bright new typewriting machine for their very own use in the Nest. Heretofore, they had had to borrow the one the Bobolinks used and there was always confusion. Now they could patter away on the keys of their very own machine and learn how to finger the keys properly and write neatly and correctly.

"When I told the salesman to pick out an easy-running typewriter, for it was to be used by girls of seven to ten years of age, he looked as if he didn't believe me. I realized that he thought I was joking, so I asked him, 'Did you ever hear of a club called Blue Birds—or a Band called Bobolink Boys?'

" 'Yes, they are the ones who did all those things for the Little Citizens, aren't they?' said he.

" 'Well, this typewriter will be used by the

Blue Birds, who are not more than eleven years at the most,' said I.

"So here you are, ladies, and I hope all of you become efficient writers, so that when you are a few years older you will be writing your own book manuscripts on your own writing-machine —and I will publish them for you," concluded Uncle Ben.

As it was the first week of June there was not much time to spare from school lessons, for the yearly examinations were about to begin, and every scholar wished to pass as high in percentage as was possible.

The Publishing Office saw little of the Blue Birds or Bobolinks during those days, and when they did meet on Saturdays or an evening during the week, it was not for work but for a talk or recreation. During that month Uncle Ben took care of the magazine, for he would not think of having the young publishers assume too many responsibilities, and he said that school exams. were enough at that time.

So the children had but little idea of what would appear in their magazine following the Funny Number. But Uncle Ben had an idea of

which he said nothing to anyone else. Only Flutey knew of his plan.

Consequently, the day after Commencement, when the Blue Birds and Bobolinks felt they could take an interest in other things once more, a package of the current month's magazine arrived by express from the city where it had been made up for that time.

Naturally, they tore open the wrappers with impatient fingers and sat down to admire what Uncle Ben had published.

The magazine was called "Little Citizens' Number," and of course everything in it was about Happy Hills and the wonderful plans for the summer.

Mr. Richards had sent out their best photographer and had taken pictures of the whole place, including some of the Little Citizens already camping in the Nests. These pictures were expected to appear with a long article in the Sunday paper of that week. The magazine was given the permission to use the photographs, also, for that current number.

The cover of the magazine had a group picture in medallion frame of the seven Owens children, with little Maggie as the head of the fam-

ily. A story to tell all about how the Little Mother and the rest of the family were discovered, and what they were now doing to regain health and the joy of childhood, was written to interest people who approved of this form of benevolence.

Then followed pictures of the place. A bird's-eye view of Happy Hills showed the old-fashioned house where Aunt Selina lived, and the wide lawns and woods.

Another picture showed a finished Nest from the front. An interior view showed the bunks and lockers, the rain curtains, and the place where toys and tools were kept.

The Little Farms, the play-house, refectory and infirmary had a page devoted to each, and enough different views of each subject were shown to give the reader a thorough idea of the entire place.

One page was given to the names of teachers who had offered their services for the summer, and another page was given to the account of great-hearted physicians and trained nurses who had agreed to take turns in being at Happy Hills so that the sick or crippled children could have regular attention all through the summer. All

this was done with the spirit of charity and love, and not for financial gain.

A number of pages were given to the list of Little Citizens who had already applied for shelter in a Nest during the summer, and news of when and how these Little Citizens were going to Happy Hills. Also, a page was devoted to explaining how children should apply for an invitation, whom to see and how to get ready to go. There would be plenty of Nest room to accommodate at least five hundred children and the list of those to go totalled only one hundred and seventy, so there were still plenty of vacant Nests to fill. It was hoped that every Nest would be filled before the last of June, so that the success of the plan could be determined before the end of the summer's trial season.

"I think this number ought to start things moving in the direction of Happy Hills, don't you?" said Ned, when the last page of the magazine had been turned.

"Yes, and Mother Wings told me to-night before I left the house to come here, that Uncle Ben had mailed a special copy to every benevolent name he could find in the register and to every Welfare Worker, every physician who

might wish to take advantage of the big invitation for children, to every hospital and clinic in the eastern cities, and to every Day Nursery, Settlement Workers' and Nurses' Homes that he could hear of or find addresses of. In this way everyone in that line of work will know of Happy Hills before this week is over and the Sunday papers will follow up the plan with its fine big story and pictures, so that anyone who hasn't heard of the work before Sunday will surely hear of it then," said Ruth.

But it seemed that everyone who entertained an idea of helping, and any Little Citizen who yearned to go to Happy Hills, had had some gleam of the truth of the work before that Sunday came around. Not that the newspapers sold less copies of the paper, for the general interest was so great that people bought scores of the papers to mail all over the country to their friends —some going to California and some to Maine, some to the South and some even travelling as far as Alaska where interested friends were living.

But, dear children, so many great ideas were started that summer from the way the papers and the public took up the plans and work for

Little Citizens, that it will take another book to tell you about them.

Of all the wonderful talents and gifted children discovered in the Little Citizens at Happy Hills that summer; of the stories told by them, some of these stories so thrilling that they sounded more like fairy-tales or moving picture tales than real fact. But, then, facts are oft-times stranger than fiction.

Of the lame who walked, of the sick who were healed, of the cripples who grew straight and the paralyzed who began to move and do things —all of the things that happened in that summer at Happy Hills in the Valley of Delight are waiting for you in the Little Citizens' record of events.

Of course there were happenings that caused the nerves and courage of everyone to be taxed to the breaking point, but they all turned out right in the end. There was a fire that threatened to destroy the whole camp, and it was started by a boy who played with matches. But the training the Little Citizens had had each day to prepare them in cases of emergency, and the protection against fire, soon controlled the destructive blaze.

Then there were some unmanageable street children who secured admission to the camp in some way without having their past records looked up at the Juvenile Courts, and they caused all sorts of trouble for a time, but gradually they, too, were corrected and brought to see how desirable it was to be obedient and good, and they developed into fine citizens.

There was a case of a little fellow who tried to swim in the shallow pond and got caught in some eel-grass and was almost drowned, but a brave Little Citizen rescued him. For this a medal was presented to the child, and that started the plan of giving medals of honor for other things the Little Citizens did, so that everyone wished to win a medal.

Then the wonderful Mr. Richards and Uncle Ben started to organize the Little Citizens into a drill corps. And the Boy Scouts were so interested in this plan that enough of the older boys of experience went to Happy Hills to train the companies and squads during the season so that system and order was the result when the season was over.

But, of course, all of these things could not have been foreseen that day when the Blue Birds

and Bobolinks sat in the barn admiring their magazines. They hoped for these results, but as yet no one could tell.

Following that day in the office of the Publishing Company came a telegram, forwarded from the wireless station in New York Bay, saying that Mr. Talmage was on board the incoming steamer from South America, and would be at home in a few days.

This gave everyone so much to look forward to that the magazine was forgotten for the time being. Even Uncle Ben was eager to welcome back his brother from his flying trip to the lumber regions of Brazil.

"I wonder if father can spend the rest of the summer with us," wondered Ruth, as the Blue Birds were assembled for the last time in their Winter Nest, for Ike had prepared the Summer Nest in the old tree for their use during the warm days.

"I don't know, but I did hear Daddum tell Mumzie that he would have to take a long trip to California this summer to inspect and value some Redwoods there. So I'm afraid that he won't be here to enjoy your father's visit. I don't know what he wants us to do this summer,

you see, for no plans have been made for us to go to the seashore or to the mountains, as usual."

"I wish we could all spend the summer at Happy Hills with our Little Citizens," ventured Betty.

"I don't believe the Little Citizens would enjoy having us there half as much as we would like to see them and watch how things go," declared Dot.

"No, they might feel as if we were watching and talking about them, and they wouldn't feel natural; but we can go and visit them now and then, I should think," said Ruth.

"Suppose we suggest a trip over there to Uncle Ben when he comes here again. The camps ought to be pretty well filled in another week, don't you think so?" asked Ned, of the others.

But for all their planning and wishing, a very different thing happened for the Talmage and Starr children.

When Mr. Starr found he must definitely take the trip to California he wondered if it would be possible to take his family and make an automobile trip of it. He said nothing of this until he had seen and talked with Mrs. Talmage to

find out if her husband intended going west that summer on his lumber plan.

After many secret meetings and much talking, the Starr parents and Mrs. Talmage decided that they could take all the children on the trip, providing Mr. Talmage expected to visit the Redwood forests that summer.

And how the two families started, taking Jinks with them, and how they stopped at Happy Hills to visit the Little Citizens, and how they finally, after many adventures, arrived in California, is all told in "Five Little Starrs on an Auto Tour."

But the Blue Birds and Bobolinks who remained at Oakdale after the touring parties left, were well cared for by Uncle Ben, who planned and treated them to every fine outing he could. He spent his summer at Mossy Glen during the Talmage's absence, and Mr. Richards came down two and three times every week, and spent every Sunday with Uncle Ben. This gave them plenty of time to talk over plans and ways of carrying out ideas for Little Citizens, and the Blue Birds and Bobolinks were present at most of these talks.

It had been decided by the Publishing Company that as many of their printers and editors had

gone on the western auto trip, it would be much wiser to suspend the July and August numbers of the magazine and come out in September with a thick magazine, full of the adventures of the publishers during the summer, and of the doings of the Little Citizens while at camp. That gave the children at Oakdale a vacation from worry over the publishing work and made folks look forward to the Big September Issue.

Soon after the tourists left home, letters arrived for Uncle Ben and all of the little publishers left at home in Oakdale. The letters gave glowing accounts of the fine camp at Happy Hills and urged Uncle Ben to take all of the Blue Birds and Bobolinks on a visit to spend the day with the Little Citizens who were doing so wonderfully well in the Valley of Delight.

"Oh, do take us, Uncle Ben!" cried Tuck.

"I am just wild to see all of them playing there!" sighed Betty.

"If we do something for you, won't you do this for us?" asked Helen.

"What will you do for me if I agree to take you there on Saturday morning and spend all day Sunday with Flutey?"

"Oh, oh! Spend a night at Happy Hills, and all Sunday?" exclaimed Frances, excitedly.

"Well, I don't know, I only asked you what you would do for me if I offered to treat you," said Uncle Ben, a twinkle in his eyes that the children well knew meant business.

"Anything! Everything you say!" chorused the children.

"Will each of you promise to write down anything you hear which will make good writing for our magazine?" asked he.

"Of course we will! We will do that anyway, even if you don't ask it as a favor," declared the children.

"Well, well! I must call up Mr. Richards and see if he will go with us!" said Uncle Ben, going over to the garage where Ike had a telephone.

Soon after, he returned and said, "Our friend says he will be charmed to escort us to Happy Hills. So, children, you must find out if you may go in the car with me to visit Flutey over Sunday."

So delighted were the lonely Blue Birds and Bobolinks who remained at Oakdale that summer that no parent had the heart to say "no" to the trip; so, early Saturday morning, a large

touring car appeared with Mr. Richards driving it.

When everyone was tucked safely in, off went the car in the direction of Pennsylvania.

Once over the State lines they felt they were nearing their longed-for destination. And by noon of that day Aunt Selina had the pleasure of hugging every little Blue Bird and Bobolink that had been deserted by the heads of the Publishing Company in Oakdale.

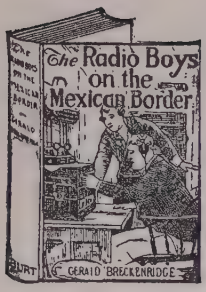
"Well, well! I certainly have a great surprise waiting for you, dear children. And I am so happy to tell you that you will enjoy the result of our last winter's work in the Nest as much as I shall enjoy your pleasure," said Aunt Selina.

Then Uncle Ben and Mr. Richards marshalled the children to lunch in the great old-fashioned dining-room and such a chatter followed that Aunt Selina remarked, "Nothing but a nestful of happy birdlings could make such music!"

Immediately after lunch everyone was eager to visit the Valley of Delight, so they ran out and waited for Aunt Selina to get into her rolling-chair, for it was too far for her to walk more than once a day, and she had been there in the morning to inspect the work.

That was a happy visit, for the Blue Birds and Bobolinks were so proud of the camp that they felt as if they could do almost any big thing after that.

The Little Citizens they met and the things they saw and the stories they heard will be told you, too, in the next book of Blue Birds, called "Blue Birds at Happy Hills," for we must give the city children a whole book in which to tell their stories of all that the Blue Birds and Bobolinks did to make that a really truly Valley of Delight.



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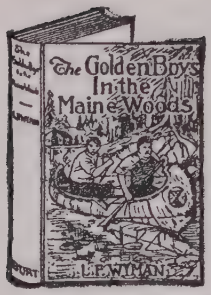

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